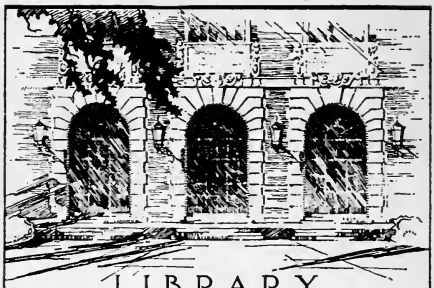

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SAINT PATRICK:

A NATIONAL TALE

OF THE

Fifth Century.

BY AN ANTIQUARY.

What cracker is this same, that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath?

. . . . . .

Croak not, black angel, I have no food for thee.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH;
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
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1819.

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SAINT PATRICK.

SAINT PATRICK.

CHAPTER I.

Ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν

HOMER. *Iliad.* ά.

On rocks incumbent o'er the deep
The piping winds his vigils keep.

DERMODY.

IT was a notion of Darwin's, that sleep is a disease; if it be, we must, in the *elegant* language of a fashionable * writer, "just be

* A friend suggested the term "Hosanna'd" as more appropriate; but I can find no good authority for applying it to a mortal. The only instance of the word so used, which I have met with in good authors, is in San-

doing with it," and be contented to muse, with unavailing envy, on the happiness of sharks and dolphins, who continue for months to track through the ocean the sleepless sailing of our ships, and watch amid the waters for the plunge of a corpse, or the pitching of a mast-boy from his giddy elevation. May it not be, that sleep is one of those things in this earthly scene which links us with the invisible universe, when the angels of God can come unseen, and spread before the fancy glimpses of starry landscapes, and heavenly territory, to woo us from vice, and fix our thoughts on that world to whose dim boundary we are so invisibly and irresistibly drag-

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derson's King James, and was profanely used by a geese stealer, who had been set in the stocks. "Hosanna! to your Majesty," said the man in durance as the king passed by, "Hosanna! Can you resolve me who is most worthy of the stocks,—I who stole geese from the common, or the justice who stole the common from the geese?"—I should be glad to know whether any other instance occurs of a similar kind.

ged? Or may it not be, that sleep is sent to make us feel our helplessness,—to crush the aspirings of pride, and level with its spell the castles which tower so loftily, and the hopes which climb so daringly in the little circle of our daylight visions?

One thing we know, that it is the only power which can wrestle with the passions, and tame them to submission; and, however strong they may appear, or however fierce they may rage, sleep never fails to strangle their violence. The poetical night thinker, therefore, belies "tir'd nature's sweet restorer," when he says she "flies from woe;" on the contrary, she is its only soother, and never ceases to hover round the pillow of agitation till she still its workings. She has no power, however, over dreams, which come and depart without her bidding, and often continue or renew the mental struggle which she has succeeded for a moment to quell.

Without these sapient observations, we should have been puzzled to reconcile with

probability, the rock slumbers of Saint Patrick, no less than the subsequent visionary spectacles which floated through his fancy. The conflicts of his mind, during his imprisonment, and the more violent agitation he had suffered from the events of the night, produced a crisis which checked the tide of his volitions in the very noon of its flood. But his fancy remained awake, and winged him to the land of his youthful pilgrimage, where Mount Ætna looks abroad from the middle sky on the harvest fields of Sicily, the waves of the Mediterranean, and the far-receding shores of Italy and Greece. And he could perceive, by the light of its volcano, the chafing of the sea-breakers, and the wrecked fragments of a galley tossed and disappearing among their foam. The foam itself, as it leapt into ridges, altered its attributes, and pictured to his fancy a sea nymph, "beauteous as an angel newly born," * sporting in

* Wieland's Oberon.

gleesome frolic on the crystal of the unruffled sea. Again the waves rose and yawned, and exposed to view the body of a lady clinging with a death-grasp to the splinter of a plank, but the dash of the closing waters snatched her from his sight. The vision again flitted, and he fancied himself suspending in airy and doubtful balance over the burning summit of Ætna, and felt his brow alternately fanned by the waving of its flames, and the cool breath of the sea-breeze, while he looked down and saw, around the brink of the fiery gulf, a circling band of demons yelling with unearthly joy, and weaving their infernal dances. The long columns of fire which rose from the bowels of the mountain, instantly shot up into lofty trees, and a dark grove embosomed and concealed the fiendish revellers, but soon opened again from the centre, and there he saw a huge shapeless altar of splintered rocks reeking with human gore, and around it human bones lay scattered about with remnants of flesh scorched and roasted, still adhering

to their extremities. He fancied that he was dragged forward to this scene of horror by a griffin, whose foul breath polluted the atmosphere as it moaned in belches through his throat. He thought he looked up to heaven with martyr resignation to his fate, and there he beheld a troop of white-winged cherubs bestriding the winds, and floating like the tufts of a wane-cloud through the deep azure of the firmament, and heralded by a shower of falling stars, they alighted in the grove, and advanced to the altar. The monster, in terror of the heavenly host, relaxed the grasp of his talons,—the altar and the grove suddenly disappeared,—Ætna sunk into the earth with all its pines,—and he fancied himself alone by the walls of a grey cathedral in the midst of a plain, and the Appenines,—no, the Morne mountains, rising majestically in the back-ground, and pouring from their recesses numerous bands of Christian worshippers, who came streaming in white apparel to the cathedral;—but they were all suddenly

changed into furious winds, which roared round the cathedral walls, and sent them toppling down on the terrified dreamer. But he felt them not, for the stones fell softly around him, and wrapt him in the folds of a Druid's mantle, but suddenly changed again into an embowering canopy of sea-billows, playing innocently above him like the green movements of a vineyard when the wind walks abroad among its beauties. He fancied he heard a female shriek reverberating along the vaultings of the waves above him. He started,—he awoke,—and the screams of the sea-mews, as they rose on the wing from the platform where they had roosted beside him, and the waves breaking on the ruins of the rocks below, fell dreamingly on his ear.

He rose,—he staggered wildly about, and could scarcely believe that the pillared cliffs which stood in solitude and grandeur around him, and the long stretch of the ocean that widened in the distance, partook not of the unrealities which the angel of dreams had

been unrolling in pictured variety before him. As the films of slumber, however, cleared away, he began to recognise the singular couch where he had so miraculously dropt on the preceding night, and recollected his clambering down the cliff where he perceived the dwarf bushes of heath which had aided his descent. The wassel rout of the Samh'in worshippers was now hushed, and nothing remained of the cairn fires on the summits of the cliffs but a few embers, whose thin smoke mingled with the greyness of the dawn which began to spread its light over the eastern sky.

The sun is up,—the sea smokes and sparkles,—and the moors and hills lie in broken confusion among the morning mist. The grandeur of this scene had overpowered the mind of the apostle when it was hung with darkness; and he felt the awe of God's presence breathing from the gloom of the rocks. He had now to see it in the garniture of morning, to feel that the Creator can clothe

the grandest of his works with beauty; and, while he scatters around the terrors of his power among the wreck of mountains, and the tumults of the ocean, he spreads over all the charm of heaven's light and the loveliness of the blue sky.

Saint Patrick had, in his youth, wandered among the Alps, and had seen Mont Blanc throned among his snows, and thundering down his rocks and his avalanches on those who dared to profane his solitude by intrusion; yet, even in this scene of sublimity, he had never so strongly perceived the footsteps of God as now, that he could trace his awful march along the shores of the ocean where he had laid bare the pillared foundations of the earth, and piled up the ruins of a vanished continent as a barrier to the sea. Indeed, it may be questioned whether the inland grandeur, which lives in the stormy solitude of the Alps, and haunts their broken ridges and their towering peaks, can ever tell so much of the unseen operations of nature, as the bold

cliffs which overlook the tempests of the Atlantic, and hear from afar the roar of winds and waters as they troop tumultuously from the pole, and wreck their idle fury on the ocean walls of Erin. Nay, there is surely a more simple sublimity in looking afar from the summit of Teneriffe on the immeasurable circle of waters, with the waves leaping and rolling far from human home, under the azure pavilion of heaven, than to sit on some windy peak of the mountains of Himalaya in the bleak region of the upper air, and from the neighbourhood of the stars to turn the eye on the plains of Tartary and the sweep of the Ganges, while its mountain banks look no bigger than the terrace of a garden, and the distant sea girdles the savannahs in the horizon like a line of golden light in a summer sky.

The impression which this morning scene threw over the mind of the saint was religiously grand, and, for a while, banished, or rather seemed to continue, the images of his

wild vision; but daylight is ever at war with the phantoms of slumber, and the intrusion of its realities soon reminded him of the loss of his daring deliverer,—of the night cry of distress that had reached him from the sea,—and of his own helpless insulation from human aid. He alternately cast his eye on the little patch of turf that had pillowed his slumbers,—on the high columns that skreened him from the south wind,—and on the sky which floated so beautifully above him, that it seemed the very mirror of unclouded hopes and serene devotion.

The revellers had all disappeared at daybreak, and not even a solitary wanderer remained on the headlands to mark the beauties of sunrise, and lift up his little meed of admiration to their author. But Patrick could perceive, on the beach below, a boat lying on the rocks as if it had been driven thither by the swell of the tide, and, as it seemed to be abandoned, he doubted not that the crew had perished, and that the night screams had

arisen from some female who had been luckless aboard while it had been upset in the surf. His eye could not distinguish, however, the appearance of any corpse along the boundary of the high water mark; but this did not assure him that the bodies, if such there were, were not concealed behind some of the broken pillars that lay on the shore, or in some of the numerous fractures which every where indented the rocks.

His anxiety was farther increased by the circumstance, that this was doubtless the very boat which had been sent to his rescue; and, when he joined its disastrous fate with the sudden and unaccountable disappearance of Bryan, and his own distressing situation, he could not help concluding, that the frown of heaven lowered over their daring design, and had so violently marred it to crush their temerity. He fell on his knees, and anxiously supplicated pardon for their rashness, while he silently breathed his gratitude for his own miraculous preservation. The exer-

cises of devotion always strengthen our confidence in heaven; he rose with an expression of cheerfulness on his features, which was shaded with the thoughtful regret with which he viewed the solitary boat, and reflected on the probable destruction of those who had risked their little all for his deliverance. This frame of mind awakened his anxiety to learn their fate; and he renewed his examination of the cliffs about him, which, in the darkness, had proved fruitless.

On the western corner of the platform lay a large fragment of rock which had fallen from the cliff above. It rested on the verge of the precipitous escarpment, and as the rocks were very irregular beyond it, their appearance was in a great measure hid from his view. As he was convinced, however, that the path lay in that quarter, he was anxious to discover its direction, though it might be out of his reach. But the obstacle of the rock could not be removed, and he dared not trust himself to climb upon its angles, as

it was rent in several places by its fall, and the precipice beneath was truly dreadful. He again bethought himself of the heath by which he had clambered down the preceding night, although it was now more unsafe than it had been in the dark, from the giddiness induced by his height above the beach, and it was chronologically impossible for him to have perused De Saussure's valuable directions for looking down precipices with security. He ventured. When he had descended a little way, he saw the path to the right as it emerged from behind the western angle of the platform, where the fallen fragment had hid it from his view. This discovery only served to tantalize him; for he saw no practicable means of surmounting the unlucky barrier which forbade his escape, and he looked on its rugged surface in musing suspense. To increase his difficulties, he began to reflect that the news of his escape would soon spread among his persecutors, and every pass would be instantly beset, even should he be able to surmount the rock, and reach the path.

CHAPTER II.

Unfenced desolation
Leaves them as naked as the vulgar air.
K. John.

In this manner did Patrick alternately breathe his petitions to heaven, and survey the obstacles which severed him from human aid; while he scarcely regretted his misfortunes in the feeling of celestial awe, that swelled his thoughts when he cast his eyes on the display of Almighty power, which the Architect of the Universe had reared in sublime majesty around him. The shadows of the columns fell over the water in the creeks, and darkened the brightness which glowed along the ripple of the open sea, while those columns which jetted out into the sun, would have showed in the reflecting water like the summer palace of the Nereids, had not the waves, as they

wantoned along the surface, broken their continuity, and dispelled the illusion.

More than once, however, he mistook these broken reflections of a sunny column for the body of the unfortunate lady floating about in the random play of the waves. These fancies caused him to survey them with increasing interest, and at last, he thought he saw distinctly—not the lady, but the daring Bryan, weltering about in the water. No—it did not appear to be lifeless, for he seemed to be diving down by the sides of one of the columns into the deep, cautiously keeping by the rock, as if he were searching for something, and aiding his descent by pushing his feet against its angles.

Could this also be an illusion? A waking vision? His wraith belike. But Patrick was somewhat sceptical in the superstitions of his country, though the early notions which he had imbibed still lingered tenaciously in his mind, even when he armed his reason to disperse them. The wraith, however, if it

was such, instantly disappeared, as the figure sunk in the dark green water, and the column along which it had glided lay solitary in the bosom of the deep, sometimes glancing with the sun-beams, and sometimes vacillating to and fro with the motion of the waves. He thought also that he heard whispers among the rocks around him, as of persons searching for him :—perhaps the Druids, but these ceased, and he was again left to the quiet of his bleak solitude. As a last resource, he began to examine the rocks over which he had fallen, and which he had hitherto unaccountably neglected; yet here also disappointment met him,—for, though the escarpment above the platform was not very high, it was withal so smooth and unbroken, that it afforded no resting place for the foot, and no projection to hold by, and the summit was considerably beyond his reach, though some stunted heath hung lower down which might aid him. As he was eagerly straining to reach one of the twigs to ascertain its fastening, and capability

to support his weight, a pyramidal fur cap made its appearance over the edge of the rock, which he recognised to be the property of Bryan, a circumstance which strengthened the warning superstition the diving figure had awakened in his mind;—he was not so accurately skilled in the popular creed as to know that a wraith never presumes to appear more than once.

That it was no unearthly wight which mocked his eye soon appeared. He heard him speak in a low voice to some one near him, and he perceived another cap shoot up beyond the rock, and immediately afterwards the bushy head which supported it emerged into view. The holy father ejaculated his thanks to heaven; for he doubted not, that he would now, by their assistance, be delivered from his airy prison. It did not occur to him that the stranger might be one of his enemies, and more might be in readiness to conduct both him and his deliverer to the prison in the grove: he referred their coming to the in-

terposition of divine aid, in answer to his prayers. The stranger, in looking over the high ledge of the rock, was the first to discover Patrick, as he stood on the turf with his eyes raised to heaven, and his thoughts wrapt in holy devotion.

"Odd safe us," cried the stranger, "yonner he's man, on the vera lip o' that high craig. Eh? look—I mervel how he wan till't. Na it's a perfait meracle."

"Well,—why,"—said Bryan, hesitating over his vocabulary of exclamations, "I wudn't have believed that now, though I seen it with mine own eyes, that's if it had been toul' me in Connaught. The great magician Dubhtaghan himself cudn't done that for the life of him, not with all the charms in the green book of Ballyree."

Patrick soon undeceived them as to his power of working miracles, by requesting their help to get out of his prison, but neither of them could dismiss the idea that he had been set down there by supernatural aid, and they

hesitated to interfere with his liberation, for fear of being enchanted, and kept in durance on the face of these wild cliffs as a reward for their exertions. Grougar, who was Bryan's companion, began to suspect, that all the disasters of the preceding night had been caused by the superior power of Druidical magic, over the Catholic prayers of the saint, and wished fervently that he had never heard of the rescue, and that he were safely home again at his sheeling, consigning over to the devil, the "cabin ye wudn't know from the palace," which had lured him into the scheme.

Bryan, however, was not so easily driven from his design, and after examining the several bearings and angles of the rocks, he concluded, that the only practical way was to remove the fragment which blocked up the west corner of the platform. Grougar stood in gloomy hesitation and terror, from which Bryan roused him with,

"Bless me, friend, what in heaven makes

you look so shilly shally? Len' me the loan of that spear ye have there, till I have a touch at this ugly piece of a rock with them jars in it."

And seizing the spear, without turning his eye from the rock, which he intently examined for the most suitable point of attack, he at last fixed upon a rent into which he thrust the shaft of the spear, and succeeded in dislodging a large portion of this untoward obstacle. He successively and successfully attacked the other unsure angles of it, till he left nothing but a firm mass resting secure on the level of the platform, over which Patrick made his way to the precipitous path that led to the beach.

Nothing could equal Bryan's exultation when he again saw that his project was likely to be successful. He could scarcely restrain himself from dancing for joy, although a single false step might precipitate him into a similar cliff-built prison to that from which he had just liberated the saint. Grougar was

so overawed by Patrick's dignified mien, that he kept cautiously behind, and stared stupidly after them as they descended the path.

They reached the bottom of the cliffs in safety, and felt a comfortable relief from the giddiness which had swimmed before their eyes in their perilous descent. Patrick was anxious to inquire concerning the night-shrieks which had so alarmed him, but the danger of the way required all their attention. No one appeared on the beach besides his two deliverers, and a boy who was busy in mending the boat, and who proved to be Grougar's son Baldie. Patrick having fallen into a kind of confused reflection on his dream and on the events of the night, had persuaded himself that a lady had perished in the surf, and asked his companions whether they had found the body.

"Is it the lady you mane?" answered Bryan. "O we did, an't plase you, every inch of her."

"The will of God be done;" ejaculated the saint. "Who, indeed, could wrestle with

the billows of the deep? Where have you laid the body, that I may pronounce over it the service for the dead, and propitiate heaven for the repose of her spirit?" *

As this was language and doctrine which Bryan could only guess at without comprehending, he could only reply, "Bless your good heart for that any how," without knowing precisely what he praised, and, at the same time, he conducted Patrick along the shelves of the beach towards a fallen rock from behind which smoke was issuing. This rock lay sloping against the perpendicular cliff, forming underneath a large triangular space, in which a fire had been kindled, and around it were several persons, who all in a breath uttered an exclamation of surprise, when the majestic figure of the apostle ap-

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* Ινα εἰς ἀναπαυσιν ἀπελθῃ ἱνα ἰγεω σχῃ τον δικαστην. κ. τ. λ.

St Chrysostom, *Homil. 32. in Matth.* ix.

peared at the opening of the rude shelter where they were assembled.

I should not, however, have said, that *all* were surprised, for there kneeled a figure in the part most remote from the entrance, who moved not his head, but bent himself with a disconsolate air over what appeared to be the body of a female seemingly lifeless, lying on the rough floor, with her head pillowed on some dry sea-weed.

Mutual explanations were briefly given and received; for their time was important, as every instant exposed them to discovery from their foes, and their little boat and the wide sea were their only hope. But my readers, whom I augur to be at an immeasurable distance from savage pursuit, and quietly and comfortably dosing over my pages; if they have accompanied me so far, may have more leisure to listen to this important occurrence of our story, which I promise to give them in my best manner, and they must have observed I am as sparing of it as of my holiday suit,

which I have contrived to preserve in pristine glossiness since the glorious coronation of his majesty. I give this forewarning to those readers of my own confraternity, who prefer tattered and thread-bare doublets, and warm woollen wigs, to the spruce frock coat and natural locks of the last spring fashions, that they may not be disappointed, or rather, that they may turn over several of the succeeding pages uncut, till, in my own good time and way, I find it convenient to introduce them to a *bonne bouche* I have kept in reserve, expressly cooked for them according to a recipe contained in that invaluable manuscript, the Psalter of Cashel.

Know then, that while the apostle ascended the peak, as we have already related, Bryan had gone round it and discovered the path, at the top of which he found Grougar stationed, he having returned from the shore, to direct them, after he got his boat safely moored in readiness, to execute their design. They had no sooner met, than the appear-

ance of some of the revellers near them, obliged them to descend the first stretch of the path to avoid detection. While they were standing in the dark bosom of the rocks, alarmed for the saint, who was thus left alone, and in danger every moment from the parties who were wandering tumultuously around;—a cry of distress rose from the shore, which pierced Grougar to the very soul, for it foreboded nothing less than the destruction of his little all. Bryan was also touched, for the cry he thought was a female's, and as he never thought of woman without identifying the idea with either Evelyn or Norah, he could not bring himself to believe, that he was uninterested in the fate of the distressed female.

But how could he leave Patrick exposed on the summit of these precipices, surrounded on every side by his enemies? He hesitated whether to return to bring the saint, or to give his assistance in the danger which seemed the more urgent and immediate. The repetition of the cry determined him, and he

quieted his scruples by remarking, that Patrick might find the way alone, as he knew the description of it as well as he did; and if not, they could return before the night was spent to conduct him. On the other hand, the fury of the sea would not await the evolution of circumstances.

All this passed rapidly through the mind of Bryan, while Grougar was already half-way down the cliffs. Bryan yielded to the immediate impulse of sympathy, and followed him, resigning Patrick to the protection of providence. He did not know that the apostle was so near him, he having at this instant made his way down a part of the path.

It was fortunate that the adventurers acted in this manner; for, when they arrived at the beach, they found that it required all their assistance to rescue from the waves the person whose cry had alarmed them. The cry was indeed a female's, whom they found weltering in the surf, at one time thrown on the beach, and again, by the return of the wave, hurried

back to be made the sport of the waters. Grougar rushed fearlessly towards her, but was thrown down with violence by the dash of the returning wave. Bryan at the same instant threw himself resolutely into the surf; struggled with more than mortal strength to master the fury of the billows, and reached the hapless female when she was sinking exhausted into the jaws of the deep. The strength of the swell, however, was too violent for his mastery, when he attempted to regain the shore, and he was more than once forcibly thrown down, even after he got footing on the rocks; but, like the Titans of old, he seemed to derive renewed vigour from his overthrow, and manfully sustained the unequal combat, till he effected his retreat, and bore the rescued body to the dry rocks. Whether the unfortunate woman had yielded up her spirit in the struggle, they could not yet ascertain, neither could they discover who she might be. Grougar was indeed satisfied that it was not his wife; for they were now joined by

Angus, who had left her safe in the boat, and had made all haste to lend his aid in the danger.

While they were busy in trying to recover her, they heard another stronger voice mingling with the roar of the sea. It ceased, and was, after a short interval, succeeded by deep groans, which were strangled in their utterance by the gurgle of the water. Angus instantly darted away to the beach, leaving Grougar and Bryan to attend on the female they had snatched from the waters, and had now to endeavour to snatch her from death by the only means which their desolate circumstances could supply. Angus found a man lying moaning on the rocks without the reach of danger, though still exposed to the idle dashing of the exhausted billows.

"Stay!—Stay!"—he cried with a feeble voice scarcely intelligible. "I come, my love, I come—O! stay!"—

And he raised his dripping limbs from the rock, and was about to plunge again into

the waves, when he was arrested by the vigorous arm of Angus, who, in the shipwrecked stranger, began to recognise the prince. Malthuine turned sternly on the youth, and disengaged himself from his grasp, exclaiming with frenzy,

"Avaunt fiend! I will save her, though fate itself oppose me."

"She is safe," said Angus, in a soothing tone, and using a stronger term than he was warranted to do from the state in which he had left her.

"Where?—Where?—you deceive me.—I saw her sink in the very gulf of death. You say she is safe. Where, wretch, have you laid her? I will tear thee limb from limb if thou hast destroyed her."

The fury of the prince intimidated even the dauntless Angus, but he succeeded in quieting him by leading him towards his companions. I may not describe the emotions which agitated the prince when he found the lady extended on the cold rocks: he was the

very picture of despair. It was fortunate that there were others less overpowered by violent emotions, though none were passive or inactive. A fire was with difficulty lighted up, of such chips of drifted wood as lay scattered on the shore, and the lady was placed near it, that her receding spirit might, if possible, be arrested in its flight.

The feeble light of the fire shone coldly on her cheek, which looked so lifeless and pale, that the prince, fancying it to be the hue of death, sunk senseless beside the extended body. But who can picture the looks of Bryan, when he recognised in that pale countenance the features of the beautiful Druidess. The gloomy spirit of revenge was now quenched towards this hapless lady, and he could even weep for her untimely fate. He looked upon her as a kinswoman, because he had once saved her at the risk of his life in his little cabin, and now he had braved the fury of the sea to snatch her from destruction. —"My little Norah wept for her too," he

sighed, "but it is all over now. Alas the day I should seen such a sight!"—He looked pityingly on her blanched cheek, and tore himself away, for he thought she looked like his lamented Evelyn when she expired in his arms, and the thought was too much for him. The stream of his youthful tenderness burst open afresh, and unmanned all his firmer feelings; —pity had for once conquered revenge.

CHAPTER III.

" May angels, hovering o'er the strand,
In pity, stretch a saving hand
When death is low'ring near."

MODERN BALLAD.

ETHNE, who was as affectionate as she was fair, pitied the distress which she knew her father would feel when he learned that she was among his foes, and she refused to continue longer under the protection of the court, resolving to be the messenger of her own return to the sacred grove. She communicated her design to the prince, who had been day after day fostering a passion for his fair deliverer, without reflecting on the consequences which it might involve, and he was seldom seen but in her company. With all the ardour of this youthful passion he remonstrated against her departure; he urged the unsettled state of

the country, and the lawless deeds which might in consequence be perpetrated; and he pleaded his own inability to protect her beyond the vicinity of the court. But she remained inflexible to every consideration. Not even her affection for him, which was hourly becoming more tender, could sway her from her design. Nay, this very circumstance induced her to tear herself away from the dangerous influence of his presence.

She did not, it is true, feel any affection for O'Neil, to whom her father had promised her hand, but she resolved, even against her feelings, to comply with this rather than incur her father's displeasure, or injure the interest of their common faith. She admired some of the good qualities of O'Neil, particularly his zeal for Druidism, and his kind attentions to her father, and should he succeed in establishing their religion, she deemed the conquering of her repugnance a task that she was bound at least to attempt. Should she

remain, however, near the prince, this task might become impossible.

When Malthuine found that he could not alter her determination, he resolved, in the true spirit of romantic love, to escort her himself; but as it was unsafe and impracticable for him to venture into the territory of O'Neil, he bethought him of coasting round to the vicinity of Brassail's residence in his skiff. To this plan Ethne seriously objected, and summoned all her firmness to withstand the allurement. She lulled, indeed, if she did not conquer, the hovering wish to accept of the too agreeable company of the prince, and, to dissuade him from his purpose, turned upon himself his own pictures of danger which he had urged to prevent *her* departure. But he showed, that on this subject he could be as inflexible as herself, and he left her no alternative; for if she would not accept of his skiff, he could brave, without fear, all the dangers which threatened them by land.

Nothing, indeed, but the strongest neces-

sity could have driven her to reject what was the genuine offspring of enthusiastic attachment, and we must pardon her weakness, which was forced to yield to his passionate solicitations. This much we must say on her behalf, that she only yielded on a condition which she believed, or wished to believe, would not infringe on her duty—that the prince should leave her as soon as they reached the landing-place.

Malthuine eagerly acquiesced, as it would prolong the fascination he felt in her presence; and he instantly gave private orders to launch the skiff; determining not to communicate his intentions to any one, not even to his boatmen, till he should be fairly out at sea.

We have seen the disastrous event of their voyage. The anxiety of Ethne to be present at the festival, urged the boatmen to attempt a landing near the foot of the precipitous path, where their imperfect knowledge of the coast and the darkness of the night involved them among the breakers. Their preserva-

tion seemed now impossible. The lofty perpendicular of the rocks, against whose base the waters rushed in tumultuous fury, and the darkness which fell in awful solemnity on the recesses of the coast, presented nothing but blank despair.

The prince now found that his bravery and hardihood were of no avail. He threw a look of unutterable anguish on the gloom which hid from their view more than half the dangers that yawned to destroy them; and, with a mingled feeling of tenderness and despair, he grasped his beloved Ethne in his arms to share with her the last fearful moments of existence.

"Can you forgive me, my dearest Ethne?" —he said with agitation. "Alas! I alone am guilty of your death!—O, if I could die to save you; but heaven forbids it—we are both lost!"

She replied not, but dropt her cold cheek on his breast in speechless resignation to her fate. At this moment the keel grazed on

the shallows in shore, and the boatmen joyfully shouted "Land—hold fast and we are safe."

Malthuine rushed to the prow with Ethne in his arms, and was about to leap on shore when a wave, repelled from the rocks, broke its tumbling surges around them, drove the boat back into the boiling of the surf, dashed the lady from his embrace, and buried her among the waters. He plunged franticly after her, but found himself alone in the dark tumult of the billows. He weltered about in utter helplessness amidst their agitation, insensible, however, to their fury, and scarcely feeling the beat of the cold death-pulse which was struggling feebly in his breast. The image of Ethne was the only thing that was living within him:—all but this was cold and lifeless, and every wave which swelled around him, imaged to his bewildered fancy her floating body and hopeless struggles. But as he sprung after the often-recurring phantom, the waters always parted their huge

volumes, and he sunk into the solitude of their opening chasm.

Her shrieks he could not hear for the loud gurgle of the breakers beating with ceaseless plash in his ears; and had not our daring adventurers heard her from the cliffs, the roar of the ocean would have been her death-song, and its wave-washed rocks her tomb.

She was saved by the unwearied and tender care of her rude attendants; for the prince could do nothing but gaze, with the vacant look of madness, on their exertions for her recovery. He charged himself with the guilt of her death, and remained inconsolable. The fire, scanty as it was, restored warmth to her cold limbs: she gradually revived, and wondered to see the dim figures around her. She again sunk down, but it was to sleep, and she awoke again only to encounter the difficulties which now were common to them all in the desolation which surrounded them. She, indeed, had only to scale the cliffs to reach the sacred grove, and receive the holy

embrace of her father; yet, now, she shuddered at the thought to which she had looked forward with joy; for the sacred packet that had been entrusted so solemnly to her care was gone.

From the time she had recovered it at Glendalagh, up to the moment when she had been precipitated into the surf, she had never trusted it into any hand but her own. At that moment it disappeared, and without it she could not present herself before her father. It was lost beyond all hope of recovery, and it could not be replaced; for it was the work of a British Druid * of the pre-

* If we believe Cæsar, Britain was the chief seat of the Druids in his time. I have followed him; but he did not know much of Ireland, and his account is at variance with both the British and Irish traditions; for example, the account given by Geoffry of Monmouth, of the transportation of Stonhenge from Ireland, which, if it means any thing, must refer to its being erected under the superintendence of Irish Druids. See Dr Parsons' Remains of Japheth, and O'Flagherty's Ogygia.

ceding age, whose profound knowledge and untarnished piety would be sought for in vain in the degeneracy of that period. Brassail himself was the only person of the order who could undertake the arduous task, and he was old, and his strength unequal to the necessary exertion.

Ethne was thus musing as she lay in the inner recess, and the prince kneeling beside her, when Patrick appeared at the entrance of the rocky shelter. As he had been given up for lost, surprise for a moment made them forget their situation; the roaring of the sea, however, reminded them that even their present slender enjoyments must be instantly resigned, if they wished to escape the fury of pursuit, which would stream in every direction to intercept their flight.

"Eh! gin yonner binna the boat comin' roun' by the point," said Jenny Grougar, as she pushed her head from behind the edge of the rock to cast a despairing look on the surrounding sea; and in an instant all eyes were

turned thitherwards, to be certain that this joyful news was no illusion. It was indeed the prince's skiff. The boatmen had been more fortunate than their master; for, on being carried out of the surf by the force of the returning wave which had washed the lady into the sea, they were driven into a sheltered creek, and had remained there in dreadful suspense as to the prince's fate till morning, when they ventured out to search for his body, having no hopes of ever seeing him alive.

The boat was a welcome sight to the disconsolate group on the shore, for Grougar's curragh was too small to accommodate the addition which their party had now received. As the skiff put into the landing-place, all were on the rack of eagerness to get on board, and their looks followed every motion and pitching of its prow as the boatmen strove to point it aright.

The prince remained beside the suffering lady, whom he never left for a moment, ac-

cusing, with bitter regret, the fatal rashness that had occasioned the disaster.

" The boat is ready, an't please you," interrupted his often repeated phrases of condolence with which he had laboured to soothe the sorrows of Ethne. " Anon," he answered the impatient messenger, and motioned him away.

" Now what is to be done, my love ?" he tenderly whispered, " we are here exposed to every blast, and I fear you have not strength to scale that dreadful steep to go to your father."

" My father !" she sighed, " no, I cannot go to my father. Death would be sweeter than to encounter his frown ;—but, no,—he could not frown on me ; yet what would console him for our irreparable loss, and I could not bear to see him grieve."

" Where then can you go ?" rejoined the prince, " command my life,—my all, and I shall joyfully resign it, and reckon it the sa-

crifice of an unworthy devotee to a sainted spirit."

At this moment a hoarse shout from the summits of the cliffs announced the sound of pursuit; and the boatmen, whose rough bluntness decided without deliberation, insisted that they should put them on board.

To the joy of the prince, Ethne submitted in silence to be carried to the boat, when he suggested, that they could there consult in more safety what was proper to be done.

They were now again afloat at the mercy of the winds and waves, while the morning was still fresh, and the long shadows of the rocks darkened the inlets of the coast;—for the events which fill so many pages of our narrative were so brief and momentary, that my pen, with its usual stubbornness, refused to keep pace with their rapidity.

They could now survey at leisure, and in security, the bustle of pursuit that agitated the scattered parties which they descried hurrying along the headlands, among whom one

spirit seemed to live in every bosom. The long-robed priest and the hardy warrior were alike eager to discover the lurking-place of the fugitive prisoner, who had been so daringly rescued.

They could learn nothing from the priest whom Bryan had left in the fetters; for terror and the soporific had operated so powerfully on him as to deprive him of all distinct recollection of circumstances. They could only learn the fact that they had lost their prisoner, and as it was impossible he could escape except by sea, the greater number made straight for the coast, hoping to intercept him. But they reached the cliffs only to be tantalized with the sight of the boats under sail, and safe from their fury.

In the stern of the skiff stood Saint Patrick, his thoughts filled with gratitude to Heaven for his escape. At intervals he raised a pitying look towards the votaries of superstition, who were vainly menacing them by their gestures, and venting their idle rage in curses,

which died away on the winds without reaching those against whom they were uttered. He pitied them, but it was the holy pity of a father towards his erring children. He loved them, because they were the sons of his adopted country, and he grieved that they were the slaves of delusion. His heart melted with compassion to think that so many brave, generous, and warm-hearted patriots, should live enthralled by a designing priesthood, and should degrade their free-born spirits to the adoration of shapeless stones and gloomy forests, where the holiness and majesty of God were daily insulted with horrid and mysterious rites.

When he thought with grief on those heaven-daring profanations, his own labours rose to his view in all their littleness. He could not indeed accuse himself of indolence: He had spared no exertion, and had been reckless of difficulties;—yet when he thought how little had been effected in diffusing the true faith,—when he saw the numerous bo-

dies of men stalking along the cliffs and thirsting for his blood, because he wished to save them from delusion,—he felt his spirit sink in doubt of success. Into a mind like his, however, despair can seldom gain an entrance so long as any untried device remains to be brought into action. His trust was on his God, who would never abandon him, and his soul leapt within him with exulting triumph, as he anticipated the glorious era, which he hoped would soon arrive, when the Catholic faith would flourish and prevail in every corner of the land,—when the unholy altars of the Druids would be purified and converted into baptismal fonts, and their mysterious groves would embosom the humble churches of the Saviour.

"And these very rocks," he thought with holy ardour, "shall resound with the voice of psalms, and their echo shall mingle in one loud hymn of praise, with the wild music of the ocean waves, and the sweet symphony of the winds; and the silent prayer

of the Christian shall rise before the throne in all the beauty of holiness, with every morning that wings her way from the east, and every night that descends on the land. The terrors of superstition shall give place to the bright sunshine of the Gospel, and the mockery of unhallowed sacrifices to the pure offerings of the heart. God himself must smile at this blessed consummation; and the angels will delight to view the wretch, who has dwelt with adversity in all its bitterness, turning away with disgust from the pollutions of superstition, and cheering his wearied spirit with the hope of eternal rest in the paradise of God. Ireland shall then sit amidst the nations as the favoured land of light, and her holy men will dispense the tidings of salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth, warring in spirit for the kingdom of our Lord, and looking on high for the reward of their labours."

From these splendid pictures of the future glory of the Gospel, which the dispersed and

hurrying groups of his pursuers on shore had led his fancy to embody, his thoughts passed to the no less important detail of the means for rendering it something more than ideal.

He was grieved, however, to think, that the peaceful spirit of Christianity should be involved in bloody insurrection, and thus, at the very dawn of its promulgation, become a rock of offence, instead of a hiding-place from the storm. But as *their* cause was just, he trusted that heaven would perfect its own work in their final success. Nay, the defection of the O'Neils, he foresaw with his usual penetration, might so far prove favourable; for both his own experience and his knowledge of history told him, that nothing tends more to loosen the chains of superstition, and ungird the mind from the encumbrance of established associations, than the whirl of civil uproar and commotion. The uncertainty of possessions, —the hopes of unnumbered spoils,—the thirst for heroic achievement,—and the mingling tumult of the passions which ambition stirs

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into life and restlessness, and gluts with her intoxications, are alike hostile to what is established or ancient, and seldom fail to unsettle the most venerated institutions of religion and of government.

Patrick presumed not to fathom the counsels of Providence; but this tumult of dissension *might*, he thought, be intended both as the scourge of heaven's vengeance, and to give opportunity to build up the altars of the cross on the ruins of druidism. The very zeal, indeed, of the insurgents for their superstition would, like a brawling torrent, soon exhaust its own violence:—St Paul, he recollected, was converted when his rage for persecution was in the high meridian of its career.

While Patrick was wrapt in these lofty musings, the boatmen were striving with eager anxiety to make from the shore, and the oars flashed and the sails swung under their management with portentous hurry.

With far different feelings did the fair

Druidess sit in pale and hopeless dejection. She also could once have looked forward with joy to the future splendour of her religion, but she feared that such a time was for ever gone by. The case was not, however, so desperate as she imagined, but all her thoughts partook of the dark colouring of her own disasters, which had almost indeed bereft her of the power of thinking. She felt herself robbed of that pure sanctity which her order should preserve by living so long among the unhallowed followers of the Catholics; and she could perceive a deficiency in that awe and reverence in her attendants which, from infancy, she had been accustomed to receive from her inferiors; and though the prince almost worshipped her, yet, to his most tender attentions, she felt a kind of indefinite revolting; she felt that it was not what her father would approve. And the loss of the sacred parchments,—but she could not bear to think of that. It crushed all her remaining

fortitude, and she sunk into a listless and unthinking reverie. Her mind was a desolate blank, and pictured the solitude of ruin which the tempest leaves when it has swept away the beauty of a garden.

CHAPTER IV.

—— What haste looks through his eyes,
So should he look that seems to speak things strange.
MACBETH.

AT the time the fugitives were crowding sail to clear the shore, and their pursuers eyeing them with fierce disappointment from their elevated station, Erc O'Neil had again mustered his band within the walls of Rath-na-Carraig. His countenance was observed that morning to have subsided into a more settled and dark expression than it usually showed, and his adherents knew, that he had some scheme of mischief, or some dread of danger, working in his fancy, when he ordered his page to summon Fergus to a secret consultation. The youth instantly obeyed the message, and appeared at the entrance of the hollowed rock,

which, it may be remembered, contained and sheltered the dwelling of the chief.

And here, did it comport with the unity of our narrative, I might be tempted to apologize for delaying so long to introduce to my readers the accredited ancestor of the Scottish Royal Family; but, though it is my indefeasible right to follow the bent of my own judgment in such particulars, I will wave this ceremony of condescension, and will also omit an account of a skirmish originally intended to be inserted here between certain brethren of mine, Father Innes, to wit, seconded by the redoubted John Pinkerton; and the grisly spectres of sundry fabulous kings invented by the learned clerke, Mr Hector Boetius, for the more graceful decoration of his Chronikles of Scotland, and afterwards pruned and engrossed into the more elegant latinity of the artful Buchanan, as an indisputable illustration of his *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*, where he inculcates that invaluable blessing of liberty, so dear to modern *patriots*, entitled

the right of cashiering kings, and of reforming, that is, pulling down established governments for the behoof of the lovers of bloodshed and plunder. I can merely stop to say, that said skirmish terminated in the discomfiture of the kingly crew, and the triumph of my doughty brethren, who reinstated the young Fergus, of whom I spake, in the throne which these royal spectres had for centuries usurped to the scandal and disgrace of court and country. Yet, even when banished out of all other fastnesses in these realms, they have still the effrontery to embattle their ghostly squadrons along the walls of Holyrood, and that in broad day-light, contrary to the statute made and enacted for the better regulation of the appearance of ghosts, spirits, wraiths, and all and haill the creatures or beings of the invisible world, which expressly provides, that no ghost, spirit, or spectre, do terrify, disturb, or annoy any of the liege subjects from and after the crowing of the king's cock, which shall be maintained at the

public cost and charge for this purpose; and should any ghost, spirit, or spectre, contravene, sentence shall forthwith be pronounced in terms of the statute: *Videlicet*, some eminent and godly minister shall proceed in due form to the exorcising thereof with bell, book, and candle. We have heard, that the enforcement of this too much neglected statute was lately in contemplation in the case of the aforesaid princely ghosts at Holyrood. For this purpose, it is said, there was bespoke an exorcist noted for having executed a miraculous flying leap from amidst a brotherhood of sceptical churchmen, by which exertion his intellects were greatly endangered, and the peril thereof was not a little augmented, when he found himself wandering, in complete bewilderment, among the constellations of the third heaven, whence, however, in due time, he fell, endowed with supereminent power over visionary delusions. But he sternly refused to contribute his services on this occasion, on the plea of having his hands full of employment

orcising the spectres of paupers which ed the species in the city of his own habitation, and, Hydra-like, multiplied their battalions in defiance of the most powerful spells he could extract from dreams and death-beds, and the *morale* of smuggling, and the *materiel* of Popery; in consequence of which refusal, (and it would be barbarous to throw more ghosts upon a man's hands than he can wrestle with,) the spectres keep to their usual haunt.

The young Fergus, then, the great progenitor of the Dalriadic dynasty which reigned over Kintyre, Argyle, and Lorn, till it was united with the Pictish, or Caledonian Monarchy, in the days of Kenneth the Great, was the son of Ere O'Neil, now in arms for the redress of wrongs done in prejudice of Druidism, and more especially of his merits as a chief of Erin. This youth of high promise, O'Neil had by a marriage which he had contracted while yet a stripling, but had been forced to sustain the grief of widowhood before the noon of his age by the loss of his beloved lady.

Fergus had been the favourite of his mother, but was by no means a spoiled child; for, although she doted on him, it was not to foster his wayward passions, and to skreen his faults out of mistaken tenderness. Her affection had a more noble aim than the indulgence of fireside fondness and maternal chuckling. She thought she perceived in him the seeds of a high adventurous spirit, and of lofty aspirations after royalty and command; and these she put herself to bring into activity with all the restless assiduity of a fond mother. She already looked upon him as the heir-elect of his father; for Loarn, his elder brother, was of so gloomy and unpopular a disposition, that his chance of being elected was confessedly improbable.

With such a prospect held out to him, from the time he could lisp the names of chiefs and heroes, this darling of a mother's ambition was strongly incited to distinguish himself in all the accomplishments then reputed noble and princelike among the chiefs of Ireland.

His subsequent history shows that he did not strive in vain for distinction; every movement, indeed, of his early youth marked him as worthy of the high rank which he now occupies in the page of history. In those days, as now, were tribes of governors and instructors; but genius needs no guide. The ungovernable desire to excel, carried the young enthusiast to dart away from his dull masters, and Fergus, who was the very Alexander of aspiring enterprise, looked down from his mountain home on the pedants who surveyed his elevation with rankling envy, or normal incredulity.

Ambition is sharp-sighted. His father soon remarked, that Fergus was no ordinary youth; and he saw, with delight, his ardent emulation and his thirst for command. He gradually disclosed to him his own towering schemes, as to one who would be the sharer, and one day the inheritor, of his success.

Fergus entered keenly into his views, and bent his whole soul to the effecting of their

accomplishment. At this moment they had need of all their invention and all their bravery; for Logaire had not tamely contented himself with having repelled the assault made on his hunting encampment at Dalriogh. He determined to march in person against the chief, and humble him to such submission that he should not again presume to insult the majesty of Ireland by his fool-hardy rebellion. Of this design of the king, O'Neil had received intelligence from a trusty spy as he returned from the festival to his rocky fortress; and it was on this subject that he had summoned Fergus to a confidential consultation, as we have already stated.

When the youth entered, he discovered his father pacing about in moody agitation. The chief paused as he perceived him advance, and, with a look of stern dejection, he said,

"Fergus, we are ruined! Our rashness at Dalriogh has disconcerted all. Logaire is rapidly marching in great force to attack the Rath and scour the country. You must

haste to Brassail;—bid him employ his most powerful rites to discomfit our foes;—conjure him to summon every demon he can command, let the cost be what it may;—order him in my name" (and his countenance grew fiendish as he spoke) "to sacrifice a whole hecatomb of human victims, should nothing less suffice his familiars."

"But, my dear father," said Fergus, "I thought you did not believe in the power of these terrible doings."

"I now tell thee I do," he replied with hurried fierceness, "and I want the aid of every demon and devil that his art can muster. Tell him I must withal have a storm of thunder to hurl destruction on the apostate king and his minions; and let there be lightning, fiery lightning, to strike down their ranks, and teach them the folly of warring against our Gods."

"Had we not rather trust to the bravery of our followers?" suggested Fergus. "You know, father, that even Brassail cannot always command the obedience of the superior powers."

"I will not listen to his *cannot*. I tell thee he shall and must aid me now—at this very moment,—I may not now wait for speeches, and apologies, and *cannots*, which he knows so well how to frame. Tell him I have no time for such;—we must have deeds—deeds of blood, to show the boasted power of these divinities of the grove.—Away—haste!"

Fergus made still another effort to bring his father to a more rational mood, but he was unsuccessful, and had no alternative left except obedience to his frenzied command. O'Neil, indeed, distrusted the power of the Druidical incantations only when he surveyed them in his hours of calm reflection; and he reasoned upon their futility from conviction more than from feeling. When he was pressed with difficulties, and threatened with danger, his early prejudices overthrew his cooler convictions, and he grasped at their support, because it was the readiest which offered, and because its terrific imagery assorted best with his own dark musings. Yet, even in such

cases, starts of incredulity burst occasionally from him, and gave a wild and motley cast to his thoughts.

Fergus had been gone but a few minutes when the page entered in haste the apartment of the chief. O'Neil ordered him to be gone to his station at the porch. The page did not yield that ready obedience which was his wont, and lingered at the entrance as if he had something to communicate. O'Neil observed him, and said,

"I tell thee begone; or, if thou hast news, be brief."

"I came, Sir, to tell you," said the page, who was used with the moods of his lord, and shrunk not at his scowl,—"I came to tell you that I see a party of strange horsemen winding down the heights of Knockinmar, and advancing towards the Rath. I thought you would like to be ——"

"Order all to arms," was the reply of the stern chief; and he furiously seized his target which hung on the wall, and struck the

alarm with his spear.* He was, however, still uncertain whether it was Logaire's troops, or a party of friends from the west he had been long expecting to join him. He hastened to the top of the Rath to reconnoitre, but they were yet too distant for the eye to tell with precision who they might be; and in a little they reached the foot of the hills, and were lost in the woods of the plain.

All was now confusion and wild conjecture within the Rath. They had little, indeed, to fear from an assault in their impregnable fastness; but they were scantily stored with provisions,—as they depended chiefly on hunting in the adjacent woods,—and might, consequently, be starved into a surrender. The besiegers, however, who might attempt this, would soon find that the task would be vain unless they had a reserve to furnish daily

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* 'S Conn a cailceadh a sgiath,
'S ire comhrag gu aon-riar.
Anç. Gaelic Poems, Perth, 1786.

reinforcements; for the woods where they must encamp would afford such concealed security for ambuscading parties of their enemies as should, without losing a man, be sufficient to cut off their numbers.

O'Neil stood on the summit of the Rath, looking with anxious eye toward several openings of the forest where the strangers might be expected to appear. Across one of these he saw Fergus hurrying in his way to the Arch-Druid, and immediately after, at another farther on, several of the horsemen appeared riding along in the opposite direction.

He was now as much alarmed for Fergus as for his stronghold; for, if he fell into the hands of the king, he would be compelled to submit to any terms he might impose. He hoped, however, that Fergus's knowledge of the woods would enable him to elude them. In this particular he was kept in painful suspense; for he could learn nothing from the transitory glimpses he got of them while they crossed these little patches of open ground.

He now began to hear their voices; and the sound came rapidly nearer,—seemed rising up the rocks,—along the approach,—and now they stood at the gate, with their bridles in their hands,* while his trusty bowmen, who were drawn up on the ramparts, were on tip-toe eagerness to flesh their shafts in the first foe who should appear; and the deeds of valour that each meant to execute, gleamed in brightness through his fancy, and kindled the flame of his ardour.

You have, I doubt not, seen a man with his spirits dancing in all the buoyancy of joy from the cajolings of a confident hope; his

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* Early travellers deny that the Irish had either bridles, saddles, or stirrups. But in the manuscript of the Brehon laws, bridles of gold and silver [*Srian oir, no airgid*] are several times mentioned; and a stirrup [*longe caire*] once. Saddles we have no authority for; but I observed, on Trajan's pillar at Rome, several Gallic horses with saddles like our modern ones. The Greeks and Romans had no stirrups, at least we find none on their monuments.

trust, however, proves a broken reed; and he sees his fortunes wrecked and floating on the billowy tide of things, and himself the shunned and unpitied spectator of his ruin, turning pale at his own nothingness, and shrinking from the gaze of the world's favourites to brood in friendless solitude on the blank of his desolation. If you have seen such a man, you may picture the fallen countenances of the grim bowmen who sentinelled the gateway of Rath-na-Carraig, when all their hopes of a brave defence of their post were crushed by the friendly salutation of the leader of their visitors, and his kind inquiry for the commanding chief.

It is remarkable that men should feel disappointment when their power of inflicting evil on their fellow mortals is thus providentially fettered. Yet so it is; and these stern warriors were little less chagrined at this their disappointment, than a hunter would be to find an animal which he had supposed to be a horrid bear, couched in a thicket, and which

he had strung up his courage to attack, turn out to be a pitiful and sluggish ass, reposing like a church dignitary in peaceful stupidity.

The horsemen were the very friends whom O'Neil had expected; and their timeous arrival tended not a little to brighten the forebodings which had clouded his thoughts. They confirmed, however, the report of Logaire's advance, with the unpleasant addition, that he was already entered Rossnock Heath, and might be expected every hour to sit down before the ramparts with a numerous army. This intelligence was at variance with what he had learnt in the morning of the king's movements. He had been told that he was in a quarter directly opposite, as if the Sacred Grove were marked out for the object of his first attack.

Both accounts were partly true; for Logaire, following the advice of an old warrior who had served in Armorica with the famous Niall of the Nine Hostages, had skilfully divided his force, leading one division forward

on the grove to decoy O'Neil from the Rath, for the purpose of defending Brassail, while the other division was dispatched round by Rossnock Heath, to come at unawares, and seize upon the ungarrisoned fortress. But an invading army finds it next to impossible to execute plans which have an ambuscade or a surprise for their basis, as every straggling peasant is on the alert to watch and betray them; and their ignorance of the passes most frequently entraps them in snares similar to those of their own contrivance. Besides, the heath over which this division had to pass was withal so bare and unsheltered, that no device could conceal them from observation.

O'Neil did not know well how to reconcile these discordant accounts, but he thought it prudent to prepare for the worst, and await the event. To this he looked forward with anxiety; for his men were disheartened by their late defeat at Dalriogh; and, should any other reverse take place, his cause would be altogether hopeless.

The thought of his destined bride seldom interrupted these military schemes; for he felt for her no tender affection. He had reasoned himself into a wish, indeed, for speedily hastening his nuptials, by enumerating all the advantages of the match; he had even dwelt with pleasure on the accomplishments of the fair Ethne; but a domineering ambition left no room in his heart for love; he considered her merely as a necessary link in the chain, by which he hoped to bind her party to his measures, and in this light alone her loss grieved him. He had no doubts that she had fallen into the hands of his enemies, and they, he judged, would be cautious how they parted with so important a prisoner. He did not know that, at this moment, she was sailing along the shore of his own domain.

CHAPTER V.

Here now behoveth us well to avyse,
And of our safety good heede to take;
For here before a perilous passage lies,
Where many mermaids haunt. ——

FAERY QUEENE.

THE boats had now got out to sea, and were beyond the danger of pursuit. The mind of Saint Patrick was employed, as we have seen, in contemplating the future march of religious revolution, over the land which looked as a reflected picture of his own musings, and lay in the distance like the dim landscape of a dream; but his thoughts were not so wrapt in futurity as to make him forgetful of the lady who sat in sorrow beside him, and who seemed to breathe out her very

soul in her deep sighs. Not that Ethne wanted a feeling attendant, for the prince watched every heave of her breast, and every troubled expression that passed over her brow, as if his own life-pulse had moved in sympathy with hers, and depended on her for its every beat. But Patrick could also feel for her, and strongly; for he pitied her delusion in attaching such importance to a parcel of parchments, containing, as he divined, nothing but Ogham incantations and similar magic lore, whose extirpation, he had rightly conceived, was the first step to the success of the Gospel, and it was with this design he had formerly advised their seizure at Tralooney.

He pitied her delusion, and "his bowels yearned within him," to have her added to the list of his converts. Indeed, it was indispensable to all his future schemes; for if she continued firm to her superstition, Malthuine would be hurried away by the frenzy of love to apostatize, and those who were already

converted, and yet but slenderly instructed in the faith, would be but too ready to follow so high an example. Again, could he gain the accomplished Druidess to renounce her superstition, this alone would bring crowds to his baptism, who might otherwise have remained in the darkness of error.

This was an event, however, which he could wish for, rather than hope to bring about. He knew, in the present circumstances, it would be folly to make the attempt, even should he dare to intrude the subject on her broken spirits, and he had more humanity in his disposition than would permit such a violation of the feelings of distress. Moreover, it is in the hour of trouble that the mind throws its sinking strength on the support of celestial aid, and he conjectured rightly that the Druidess would, in the midst of these her difficulties, rest her hope on the gods she had been taught to worship, and would cling to the idea of their power to assist her. Satisfied with these reasonings,

he abandoned the thought of interfering for the present with the settled faith of the distressed lady, determining to wait for a fitter opportunity.

Bryan, who had never been at sea before, did not feel at all easy when he saw the shore receding rapidly behind them, and the lofty range of precipices and headlands sinking gradually into less elevation, and particularly as he had not heard any body say whither they were steering, and they still kept standing out to sea. In this state of mind, he made bold to say,

"I've been thinking to myself, it wudn't at all be foolish only to consider just where we're going, for it goes to my heart to sae the land running away from us yonder, as it were sailing again the very wind."

"Ay mun! hae ye that quashton to spier yet at this time o' day?" said Angus, who was stationed beside the Hibernian, and had been enjoying his perplexed looks for the preceding half hour. "Wat ye na that we're

gaun straught the gate we pactioned about, afore thir hamshoghs dang a' our plans heels-o'er-head? Whar else sud we be gaun, trou ye freen?"

"Right, right," answered Bryan, "only if they wud sail for the port, and not houl' away where there's never a foot of land to sit upon, when ye'd be waery of skipping over the tumblers there in the boat, why, I think it wud be pleasanter a deal."

"The port! dear pity ye!" replied Angus archly, "wha kens but it may be a four weeks 'ore we see the face o't. See ye na the win's blawin' right a-stern o' us, an' it's no a canny neebour when it turns ill-willy, mair especially on the braid seas. It's no like as ye war gaun atween Kintyre and Cushendun, wi' laun' a' roun' about ye, or screevin' o'er fae Lamlash tae Carrick. Na, it wad be nae great ferlie"—(and he put on a serious look) —"though we're whuppet aff tae the apen ocean, an' ne'er ane o' us win back tae craw-day. There no sae muckle as an island

northawa, that e'er I heard tell o', an it binna a place they ca' Thule, that the Roman sodgers o'erby in Albyn used to crack about, but nae twa o' them could gree in ae story; some said it was the en' o' the warld, an' some aulfarran carles mainteened the' warna siccan a place ava. We'll sune see whunabee tae our cost an' it blaw lang at this rate."

Bryan, during this alarming speech, looked alternately towards the retreating shore, and the clear horizon in the north which spanned, in shoreless solitude, the circle of the ocean. The sky he also scrutinized, to discover whether there were no indications of a change of wind; but all looked unfavourable, and he lost hopes of ever seeing land again, and sighed out piteously,

"Dear a-dear! my poor little Norah! I'll never see her more: bad luck to the day I left her alone, with never a livin' soul to ax her how d'ye do, only the oul' harper, and

he will soon be inunder the turf in respect of his age. O dear!"

Angus perceived he had carried matters too far, and began to soothe the desponding landsman, by saying,

"Hoo man! tak' na't sae serious. It's a gay stieve breeze e'enow, to be sure, but it may blaw bye like Donald's barley-caps, lang 'ore the ontren, an' gif we *sud* be cast awa, we hae mony braw bouks by our ain to haud us in countenance. Weel nou, ye wadna 'a' gart me trou yestreen when ye war ploongin' sae dreedlessly amang the breakers tae get a claught o' the drounin' leddy, that ye wad 'a' been fear't for a gliff o' win', e'en though it sud drift us as far as the oxter o' the sky yonner."

"Steer for Dunluce," cried the prince to the helmsman, as he started up from a conversation he had been holding with the Druidess.

"About ship!" vociferated he of the rudder in reply, and Bryan had the immediate

satisfaction of seeing the sails turned out of the main current of the wind, and edged so as to catch just as much of the side stream of it, as "airted" them (to use the expression of Angus) to Dunluce.

The reason for this order of the prince will immediately appear. Dunluce was (and is) a rock which became an island at spring-tides, or when the sea ran high, and looked as if the waves had left it for a monument to sport about, when they had torn down the coëval cliffs around it, or that they had spared it as a modern improver of grounds does a solitary tree, when he grubs up the foundations of the ageless forest, to mark the grandeur of his havock, and tell of its giant companions that are vanished from the land. When the tide again kept at its usual level, Dunluce was linked to the shore behind it by a broken mass of basalt, at the base of which, on either side, the surge dashed its foam and spent its loud jargoning on the echoes above. The rock was thus semi-insulated, and jetted out

into the north sea, as if it had been reared to be the watch-tower of the arctic tempests, to signal the alarm to the guardian genii of Erin, when the winds were mustering wrath, and the waves bursting their way over the ramparts of the polar ice, to storm the barriers of the green isle.

This rock was held sacred by the Druids, who always took advantage of the sublime and the terrible of nature, in their solemnities and ceremonies; and though they frequented most the gloom of oak-groves, or solitary valleys embosomed among mountains, they equally revered the solitude of an island, even when, like Dunluce, there was scarcely a patch of grass to spot its barrenness. A few huts, constructed of massy stones, were built in the shelter of the uneven surface on the top of the rock, and tenanted by a description of beings whose race, like their religion, is still traceable in the corruptions of Popery; for, in the days of Saint Patrick, Catholic nunneries were un-

known, as well as the celibacy of priests, * and other recent unnaturalities. Dunluce then was the seat of a Druidical Nunnery, if the term may be used, where a sisterhood of Druidesses had taken up their stormy residence in the huts just mentioned, and were resorted to by the neighbouring O'Neils, and even by more distant tribes, for advice in diseases, and on other trying occasions.

In these wild abodes Ethne had resolved to take shelter till she might perform the necessary lustrations, and till her father might

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* Saint Patrick was himself, according to some, the son of a priest. Long after this Vignier writes: "Les Irlandois, ne voulant endurer leur prestres sans avoir leur femmes aux eux, furent, ceste annee, declarez rebelles et heretiques, par le Pape Adrian." Nay, it has been said that it was this *unchristian* attachment of the Irish priests to their wives, that drew on the country the English invasion; Henry II. being ordered by the same Pope Adrian to destroy, slay, or enslave this uxorious and heretical nation.

be prepared to hear of the loss of the sacralia. She no sooner came to this resolution than she mentioned it to the prince, who approved more heartily of the plan than she could well see motives for, if his love were as violent as it seemed. Malthuine, in truth, had taken every method to conceal from her all knowledge of the expedition his father was fitting out, and he now feared that she might be exposed to outrage were she to be in any part of the territory which was about to become the field of conflict. At Dunluce she would be safe, as neither party would be so savage as to attack the abode of defenceless women; and he himself would be then at liberty to join his father's army, where his absence at such a time would be unpardonable; besides, he longed to encounter O'Neil in person, who was so audaciously thrusting himself upon his *rights*, and more than all, was about to widow him of his lovely deliverer, to whom he had surrendered his heart.

While they were tacking off Dunluce, the

female tenants of the rock crowded out of their huts to observe their movements. Their looks were scarcely earthly, and their attire appeared to have been imitated from the contortions of the waves, it was so singular and wild, and parts of it moved in the wind, and other parts of it clung to their bodies as if it made a portion of them. They were all seemingly old and haggard, yet none of them feeble. The ocean storms had indeed beat on them till they had become hardened to their influence, and their features were as dusky and weather-beaten as the cliffs they stood on.

Their superior was distinguishable by an immense head-dress of furs, two broad pieces of which extended downwards, and lapped her ears and the lank skin of her neck in their warm folds. Her withered, but firm strung arms, were bare to the shoulders, though she had the power of occasionally sheltering them under the volume of a broad mantle which was united with her head-dress, and formed

of the same materials. Her under garments, if garments they might be called, were formed of a fantastic patch-work, where every odd thing that would adhere was stuck on one common ground. A zone—no, a belt of tough and flexible bark, girt this medley of patching on her loins, and was fastened with an iron buckle of a whimsical shape, and studded with———pearls. She was not tall, and this fanciful costume rather made her appear less so. Her features were as marked as her apparel. A bunch of black hair fell over her brow, and hid the dun wrinkles that dwelt there. Her eyes were small, but sparkled with wildness from the bony casements where they were socketted, and seemed to dart their spirit on every object on which they looked. Such was Calyé Mulloy, the chief female Vaid of the north, who had now taken her station on the highest point of Dunluce, to watch the course of the boats which were beating round her sacred premises.

They were now gaining on the wind, and

Bryan's fears of being swept away into the shoreless north were now veering round to the rough shore itself, which had, the preceding night, been so disastrous. The next tack run them in on the Dunluce rocks, which they narrowly grazed. While they drifted by they heard the shrill voice of the Calyé Vaid from above, menacing them with vengeance if they attempted to profane her hallowed territory by landing. She did not see Ethne, who was leaning exhausted in the lower part of the boat, but her eye fixed upon the majestic figure of Patrick as he stood surveying this singular strong-hold of superstition, and breathing prayers to Heaven for its demolition. The Vaid had never seen the Saint; but his figure, and withal his vestments, told her that this could be none other than the arch-foe of Druidism, come, as she imagined, to try a contest of incantations with the sisterhood of Dunluce. Such was her idea of the saint and his mission, and she resolved to have the first word with him,—this being a

circumstance of the utmost importance to her success, and she had accordingly uttered a plentiful volley of magical jargon the moment her suspicions were started, and long before the winds could blow them to his ears.

But when she saw the youthful Druidess raise her elegant form beside the apostle, she performed a scream of such terrible pitch that the very echoes seemed stunned with repeating it, and her companions shrunk back with dread from her side. She augured, indeed, nothing less than the conversion of Ethne when she saw her in such company, and thought that all her spells were now rendered powerless by this disastrous blow. The sparkle of her eye was quenched in dimness, and her long bare arm, which she had stretched out to menace them, fell nerveless by her side.

Ethne directed them to put her ashore alone, as it would be unsafe for a Catholic to land on the sacred ground. The prince had to call up all his resolution to bear this ar-

rangement. He had never been able to wrest from her a single expression of love, though her actions spoke as plainly as words that she looked on him with tenderness. Yet he would have been glad to obtain the slightest phrase of hope from her lips, and thought that it would break like music over his sinking spirits. But love like his conceals its darling wishes, and cramps the utterance of the tongue. He rose with a look of fortitude and ease which he was far from feeling, and handed her on shore. Calyé Mulloy was in the act of descending to repel them with all her withered *gathering* in her train, but the boatmen had already pushed off the skiff to join Grougar's curragh in the offing, on their course to the nearest loyal port, and she met only the fair Ethne, who advanced to request her protection. The whole sisterhood crowded round the suppliant, and perused her with scrutinizing looks; but none of them spoke, for they dared not in presence of the Calyé, who had the art to hold them all at an

awful distance, by keeping all her counsels and intended designs locked in her own bosom, and never opening her lips but to issue a command, or order a punishment for its breach, should this occur. She heard the brief story which Ethne's weakness enabled her to utter, and close with a request for shelter. The Calyé did not speak to her in return, though she fixed her keen eye on her countenance while she was speaking, and appeared to read her very thoughts.

"Conduct her to the Tigh na Ghaoil," were the only words she uttered to her witch-like attendants, and she walked away with such wild dignity along the broken rocks, that her low stature seemed to rise on the eye at every pace into something akin to tallness. She did not even deign to look whether they were executing her order.

From the boats in the offing the whole sweep of the coast could be seen with its bluff precipices, and their back ground of swelling hills and green slopes, and Patrick marked out

in fancy the site of many a beautiful church and grand cathedral, which he hoped would one day rear their heads, and make firm the foundations of the faith.

" The're something extraordinar asteer yonner, gin I binna cheated," remarked Angus. " See tae them, sirs, see tae them! what can be ado think we ?"

" Where ? Where ?" cried Malthuine, hurrying his eyes over every corner of Dunluce, from which, indeed, he had never lifted them since Ethne had landed there ; and his mind was just in a state for transmuting every thing into the cause of alarm for her, the wild appearance of the Calye Vaid and her sisterhood having given him no favourable impression of their fitness to attend to distress, or to show tenderness to his fair deliverer. But his anxiety could discover nothing but the old Vaid pacing alone over the broken rocks with frenzied gestures, and Ethne advancing slowly with her wrinkled guides to the hut, de-

nominated, in the topography of Dunluce, the Tigh na Ghaoil.

"See tae them!" repeated the Caledonian, "o'er on the hill taps there. They're gaun like tae very win; I wuss the' may be gude in sic gallopin'. They look, Gude safe us! as the de'il were drivin' them tae Drymen, an' he's o'er aul' a sneck-drawer tae chace ony body tae a gude turn. Will ye see how the're spankin' along the side o' that green upwith, an siccan a braengel o' them too?"

It was the horsemen, formerly mentioned, pushing forward to Rath-na-Carraig, with all the speed the uneven ground would permit. They were soon out of sight behind an intervening eminence; but their march was not so concealed as they wished and trusted; for the attention of those in the skiff being thus directed towards the heights, they immediately descried emerging from a high narrow pass, a small party whom they knew to be the king's people, following with anxious caution

the track of the rebel troop, to discover their rout and design.

" Lie too," cried the prince, " my father's army cannot be far off," and the sails were accordingly furled, to wait the issue of farther intelligence.

CHAPTER VI.

The verdant bower of every thought
With pictures of thy form is wrought.
Translation from the Persian of HAFIZ.

"GIF ye wad pit me inby tae the shore," said Angus, "I wad tak a step up amang the heights, an' see tae get a glint o' what's gaun on i'the back o' them. I'm juidgin' the king himsel 'ill no be far aff, whun thae fore-spurrers are hoverin' about like the sentry-craw at a craw-court."

Malthuine objected to his exposing himself to danger, particularly as the old Vaid seemed to watch their movements with keen jealousy, and would not fail to stir up every creature that had life to follow and devour him. But he would not be gainsayed on such a plea, and was landed accordingly, as

far out of sight of Dunluce as could be accomplished.

The sun had passed the meridian before they had any tidings of their fearless scout. Then they saw the signal of a stream of smoke mounting from the summit of the furthest height; the joyful token that he had found, or got intelligence of the army; and soon after, a party of the royal guards were seen marching down the slopes in their way to the shore, to conduct the prince and the rescued apostle to the king.

Logaire was on his march to crush the infant spurrings of rebellion, before they waxed into strength. He had by rapid marches reached his present position, but had fatigued his soldiers,—for even the heroes of the fifth century could feel the unbracings of fatigue,—and he meant to quarter for the night on the banks of the Coluisgé, * a small

* The Bush-water of the present day.

brook which mingles with the sea to the east of Dunluce. His march was not a concealed one. He wished to strike terror into the revolters, and the cunning of generalship lay in the division which had been sent by Rossnock to form an ambuscade for surprising the Rath. Fires were accordingly kindled all along the brook, around which were placed the companies of the royal warriors, some reposing on the ground, some feasting on the spoils of the forest which they had snatched a moment to kill on their march, while others paced about on the neighbouring knolls to keep watch against surprise.

Night had set in before the party arrived from the shore, and the appearance of the fires straggling along the irregular line of the stream, as well as the groups around them, so strongly recalled the late scene of the Samh'in festival, that they could scarcely persuade themselves they were going among friends, till they were accosted by a well known sentinel, who was walking to and fro in the

darkness on a rising they had to cross; and they heard others on every side of them, humming over their war-songs, and kindling their courage with the poetry of their favourite bards. All were in high spirits, particularly those about the king, and although there were no tents, yet, as the night was clear and dry, they began to enjoy themselves, and dances were struck up, and songs sung, and verses repeated in praise of heroes, as if they had sat in the royal halls of Tara under the blaze of lamps and the smile of beauty.

To the apostle the scene was a theme both of gladness and grief. He felt that he was the chief mover of all the human agency which was thus brought into terrible activity. His own movements, however, were not so visible as those who took their signals from him. His were the unseen operations of mind; the spirit which stirs up the elements into conflict, while it remains itself viewless amidst the crash of forests and the rushing of the tempest. And he was glad that he had thus

roused the energies of so many men, and embarked them in the cause of truth; even though the greater number knew but little of its genuine principles; for feeling, he knew, always bears a more imperious sway than cool conviction. He was glad to see the superstition of the Druids in the wane, and their groves about to be purified of their horrors, and their high places stript of their unholy sanctity; and the men and the women who lived in the midst of this mockery of heaven, beginning to "seek after righteousness," and to worship the living God with humility and holiness.

But he grieved to look forward to bloodshed and desolation; and could even weep at the picture which anticipation sketched to him of the aged priests clinging to their stony altars to save them from overthrow, and gathering in wild alarm round the sanctuary of their sacred fire, to shield it from Catholic pollution. He grieved to think that religion

—the true religion—should not make its way in peace; but should awaken opposition and obstinate rejection, while it called down from the children of the world all the rancour of a persecuting spirit on its humble disciples. He grieved at all this; but it was for man and human nature. The religion of the cross was sakeless of the evil that marched in the footsteps of its journeyings among the nations, and breathed venom on its triumphs. It was the rooted guilt of mankind which debars them from peace, and whelms in speedy darkness the little hopes and pleasures which dance and sparkle on the stream of life, with every shifting of its current. He felt that it was this guilt, or rather its seeds, which breed and rise into growth in every bosom, that renders the society of men one horrid drama of crimes, from the scanty numbers of a savage horde, to the overgrown empire, which crumbles down, with the sapping of its own corruptions, into its original and unpopulated wilderness. Religion then he contemplated,

not as the cause, but the cure of the contagion which spreads so widely, and boils so restlessly in every heart; and it was consoling to view the blessings which it diffused through such a world of iniquity, though it should be made a grievance, and afford a pretence for the brawling ambition of a single chieftain and his warrior clan.

There was one who took little note of the bustle, which was living round the fires and ringing through the quiet sky, a sound which partook by turns of discord and of harmony; for even the harsh voices of warriors, when floating on the air, may melt into accordance, and who knows not the beauty of the evening murmur of a village, though it arise from the noisy throats of disimprisoned school-boys. The song, however, and the dance, and the blaze of fires, and the still music of the brook, which rose through the pause of the echoes; were all unheeded by Prince Malthuine. It was enough for him that the rock of Dunluce stood in the sea, and that Ethne dwelt among

its wild inhabitants. His mind would not receive any other idea. His thoughts, indeed, seemed to have fled, to dwell with her alone, and the living things that moved around him, resembled the unfelt and unreal pageants of a dream. He heard voices, but understood not their speech; he saw figures of men passing, but he knew them not, for his eye was vacant, and its energy had passed inward, to follow the fair Druidess climbing the rock of Dunluce, and disappearing at the door of the Tigh na Ghaoil with her hag-like conductors.

All this he could as distinctly picture and see, as when it actually occurred. Beyond this point his fancy reeled in darkness, for he could not divine how her lovely image should be disposed in the Tigh itself, because he was ignorant of its inner parts, and conjecture only bewildered him among its shapeless distortions. His father spoke to him, but he replied like one who is hastily awakened from sleep in words unlinked, and broken with the

jarrings of his fancy; and he turned him to go, he knew not whither.

The king was too much thronged with his military affairs to disturb himself with this singular humour of his son, and he only looked at him with a momentary surprise, and then addressed himself to some of his advisers concerning the operations of to-morrow. As the prince withdrew from their circle, he was consequently not observed, and he wandered on alternately thoughtless and thoughtful, till he found himself on the high ground above the level of the fires. And he looked towards the sea, where his thoughts had fled from him, and pried into the darkness to discover the rock over which they paused and pondered, till the female vision that lay there seemed to partake of the loveliness of heaven's inhabitants. He looked, but all was dark. The only thing visible was in the sky, where the stars sparkled so quietly, and stooped over Dunluce with such listening pause, that he thought he could love a star. And then the sea, though

to him it lay in the darkness, was at its evening song, and had charmed the winds asleep around the couch of his love; he could love it also, and its wild music, and its crisping waves, and the rocks they danced on, and the very air that darkened over them, for all these were near her, and he only was alone.

Love, in the absence of the object beloved, is a solitary passion. It shrinks from the sympathy of friendship. It dares not breathe its feelings in the ears of others, and tries to conceal its looks as well as its whispers from the prying of the world. It holds acquaintance only with the unseen thoughts of the heart, and never varies its communion, except to court the society of nature in her most sequestered dwelling-places, where she rears her mountains, and conceals her valleys, and nurses the winds of the ocean, and hurls down her sweeping cataracts, and plants her sweet gardens by the nooks of rivers, where the smoke of cities can never come, and where

the breath of man never mingled with the air. These are the companions of genuine love.

Such was the prince's love for Ethne, and it was now in the fairest bloom of its existence. She was absent from him, and the earthly and the human things that linked themselves with her fair form were absent along with her, and rose not in his fancy with the heavenly picture that stood there, breathing of all the beauties which had ever charmed themselves into his remembrance. Such is the season of love's holidays, when the thoughts are warm with recollections, and dwell with tipsy delight amidst their own visionary universe. That universe is woman, but not the woman that has a name, and walks on the earth, and shares, with her fellow-mortals, the frailties and the clogs of humanity. It is woman, stript of every thing that might jar on the heart, and trouble its glad beating; it is woman, created in a dream of the memory which it detains after it is awake, and moulds into an angelic sem-

blance of some one that lives among men, that can love, and smile on the man who sighs away his soul on her lips. To the prince, that woman was Ethne—not the Ethne, indeed, of Dunluce, but a lovely fancy which it pleased his thoughts to call so, and to believe in as a bright reality, which was gone from him, and whose shadow, even now, so spelled his mind, that he could not escape from its influence, to mingle with the brave men who had come forth to defend the kingdom against rebellion.

The intenseness of thought or of passion is never durable. It soon strains itself into weariness; and even love, with its boasted eternity spread around it, soon wanes from the mind which it has beamed on, when it has drunk up its vigour. The prince found that the same is true of its individual assaults; for, in the solitude of the rising ground to which he had wandered, he had so wrought up his fancy, and swilled so deeply of love's intoxication, that he could no longer call up

any distinct image in his thoughts, and his mind became exhausted and dim. In this state, he was found by one who had been dispatched to seek him, when he was missed from his station, and no where to be found among the other groups at the fires.

Ethne loved also, and fancies came to her in the night; but her love was not of the species we have been just viewing. The prince gave himself up to its full sway, and thought little of obstacles, which he determined to overleap or trample upon. The youthful Druidess kept the obstacles of her father's promise, and the difference between Druidism and Christianity, continually before her. The image of the prince, however, was always haunting her dreams, and breaking in upon her resolutions. She did not, indeed, know that she loved so much till he was gone from her; then she felt that the cool barriers, which her reason endeavoured to build up as a defence, were feeble as grass, and would not hold out against the assaults of

love. While the prince's thoughts hung over Dunluce, Ethne's, at the same moment, wandered with the waves along with the skiff, where she thought him still sailing; and she prayed to Onvana, the Goddess of the Waters, to restrain her wrath against these unbelievers in her power, and she should be honoured with the most splendid offerings to atone for their offence. But anon, she would shrink back from her own fancyings, and place herself in the presence of her father, who was grieving at her folly, of allowing her passions to ensnare her into danger. The night went by, but the morn brought no quiet to her trouble; for the boat was gone, and her eye could discern nothing on the wide surface of the sea, but the endless chasings of the waves, as they twinkled in the morning sun.

Saint Patrick remained constantly near the king, to aid him with his counsel; but particularly to deaden his eagerness for vengeance, and to direct the force they had under their command, more to the extirpa-

tion of superstition, than to the shedding of human blood. He knew well, that man cannot be threatened into a renouncement of his religion or his superstitions, and that the soul never wrestles harder for freedom, than when it is attempted to be cramped, and dictated to by others; and he wished that every lenient measure should be tried before violence were put in force.

Had this not agreed with their own deep-laid plans of feints and surprises, it would not perhaps have gone down with all the apostle's high influence and sweeping genius. But should O'Neil leave his Rath to defend the grove on which they were now advancing, he would be conquered at once without an arrow being spent on him; for should they succeed in surrounding him and his small handful, they judged that he would never be so mad as to offer resistance. They calculated right, for O'Neil was more ambitious than brave. Where nothing but bravery could promote his lofty wishes, he showed himself to be

fearless of danger; he never expended his valour or endangered his personal safety, by fool-hardy and aimless enterprises, which perhaps might end in conferring upon him the empty title of a hero. Empire was his aim, and he cared not whether he gained it by heroism or cowardice. In a warlike nation, the latter was not likely to succeed, and O'Neil accordingly embraced the former, not without some occasional defalcations, such as his late retreat from Dalriogh, which did not raise him in the eyes of his followers.

CHAPTER VII.

In su la cima, una voce risuona,
Mai non udissi la piu spaventosa !
BOIARDO, *Orlando Innamorato, I.* 5, 15.

It came to my ear like the voice of the dead from the hill of storms. OSSIAN.

CALYE MULLOY had all the habits and feelings of a solitaire, though she lived among the sisterhood of Dunluce; among these are presentiments and foresights, faithfully credited and acted upon, both by the foreseers and those who give in to their delusions. The arrival of her unexpected guest, and her infidel conductors, was an event which threw all her thoughts afloat; but the subsequent movements of the skiff, which she had narrowly watched, and the parties which she had descried in motion on the heights, were matters

of still greater anxiety. She foresaw, however, what she wished to foresee, that all this activity of the Catholics, which she guessed at rather than knew, would issue in their own confusion. From one of the sisterhood, who had been wandering on the mainland, she learned the advance of Logaire and the Catholic army, and she resolved to go in person, and denounce vengeance on their presumptuous intrusion.

On this wise errand, the Calye Vaid had surmounted the heights intervening by day-break, and taken her station on the very ridge where the prince had, during the night, been indulging his love-musings. She arrived just in time to hear repeated from height to height on each side of the stream, the pass-words of the out-watches, as they took their last rounds; and to see, by the united light of the expiring fires and of the coming dawn, the scattered groups of warriors who had pillowed themselves on the grass, with no tent over them but the cold sky. They were

already beginning to bestir themselves for their march, and the scattered parties were drawing nearer to the main body, to form the line of advance, and the out-watches were leaving their stations on the heights to join their comrades. Her eye soon made selection of an eligible station, whence to pour forth her execrations. It was a high knoll, of a tapering conical figure, which rose close by the western side of the brook, and commanded the irregular ground where the warriors were condensing their ranks. Her shrill wild voice was soon distinguishable above the bustling murmur of the crowd below her.

"The curses of all the gods be upon you!" were her words, "who go forth like the wolves of the forest, making your prey and your banquet of human blood, and polluting the groves, and the high places, and the holy altars. Is this the peace that your new religion boasts of? Religion!—it should be called the demon of bloodshed let loose from the great deep to riot in the gore of civil carnage,

and feast his eyes on the battle-fields of slaughtered thousands. I see him! I see him!" she continued wildly, "with his eyes glaring, and his lips open, bestriding his fiery steed, and taking his way through our fields and our forests! Behind him is desolation; and he follows, with thundering speed, the distant roar of the battle, to glut himself with fallen carcases! I see him enter among the slain, and now his steed paws with fierceness over the mangled bodies of those who have been laid low, and arches his proud neck with delight to hear the death-groans of the wounded! I see him dashing into the midst of the battle to feed his fury with the sight of human convulsion in its most terrific workings! See! he plunges into the boiling of the tumult with a scream of fiendish joy, and walks like a pillar of fire along the line where foe is faced to foe, where swords clash, and spears are broken, and the smoke of the strife covers the horrors of carnage from the sight! Pursue his steps, King Logaire!" she went on,

" Follow his career of ruin! if thou hast enlisted thyself in his clan; but know that thou shalt not deal out destruction at thy ease, without meeting the just vengeance of the gods thou hast provoked by thy apostacy,—thou shalt learn that *they* war not with spears and arrows,—the feeble weapons of man;—they will come down on thee and thy apostate minions in the terrors of heaven's lightning, and sweep you like dust into the jaws of the grave, and none of your kin shall be left to chant your death-song, or tell of your destruction; and your very name shall be forgotten among the bards when they sing the deeds of heroes! And the wretch who dares to bring his feeble gods from a far country to contend with the Almighty Beil and Onyana, shall shrink away from the danger, and leave you alone to the stroke of the thunder! But he shall not escape, for they will destroy him and his gods together, and crush them with terrible vengeance!"

These awful threatenings sounded through

the grey atmosphere over the heads of the warriors like the boding screams of a hundred ravens; for the voice of the Calyé Vaid rose into a pitch of unearthly wildness when her thoughts wandered over the future. The soldiers were in a mood which disposed them to be more affected with dread than to view her as a maniac. The dusk of the morning,—the broken slumbers of the preceding night,—their advance on the sacred grove, which was an object of terrible awe over the whole country,—and, most of all, the lingering attachment they still bore, notwithstanding their baptism, to the superstition that had been their belief from infancy,—all united in giving the denunciations of Calyé Mulloy a wild reality. She was not insane; though when she wrought up her fancy to dive into futurity, she uttered words of raving madness. Her enthusiasm made all seem real; for at such times every feature of her countenance, and every limb of her body, were as terribly eloquent as her voice; yet even then when she seemed to have lost

all command of herself in the horrid whirl of the visions that possessed her, she still stuck by the consistency of her own interest, and never stumbled on what would weaken the foundation of Druidism.

Her menacings produced an awful pause among the soldiers, who were afraid to speak to one another, lest the sound of their voice should draw her attention towards them, and involve them individually in her curse. They looked at one another with terror in their faces, and many of them stood motionless, as if to await the falling of the threatened vengeance on their heads. None of them thought of throwing themselves upon the protection of Saint Patrick; for terror had totally dispelled the little Christianity which they had tried to recollect, rather than feel,—in compliance with the orders of the king,—and as the Catholic faith, as taught by Saint Patrick, was more a religion of the intellect than of the passions, the superstition of the Druids still maintained its sway in the moment of

danger. Even the king was awed by the terrible threatenings which came to his ear, —seemingly from the air ;—for he could not see the low figure of the Calyé Vaid in the scanty light of the dawn.

The apostle was the only person who was not alarmed at this wonderful occurrence. He instantly recognised the voice which had screamed out its incantations from the rocks of Dunluce when they were landing the fair Ethne ; and he held it as foolish to disturb himself at her ravings, as to interrupt her in this her wild vocation of prophesying.

There was another present who did not fear a Druid nor their imaginary gods, because he had been brought up from childhood as a Catholic ; and their terrors were not mingled with his early associations. This was Angus, who was startled, indeed, at the first peal of the Vaid's shrill thunder, but gradually mixed up his surprise with ridicule and indignation ; and did not think her entitled

to the silence of awe which his companions were fearfully maintaining.

" The de'il's i'the aul' carlin," said he to a soldier near him, " heard ony body e'er the like o't. Look at her, man ; she's juist like a brownie in a whin-buss, wi' her fanerels o' duds flaffin' about her hinderlets, an' her twa arms wamblin' i'the air as they war' a pair o' ling fish hung out tae dry i'the wun'. Guide us, hear tae her!—hear tae her!—she maks nae mair tae talk o' lightnin' nor it war' the bleeze o' a broomstick, or gin thunner war' the routin o' a waunert stirk."

The person addressed, however, when he heard that Angus was making light of the Vaid, took occasion to face about, and leave him to finish his speech at leisure, dreading nothing short of instant destruction for standing within hearing of such fool-hardiness. " Wu, I think they be gaun a' gyte thegither," continued the fearless Caledonian, observing the panic of his companions in arms, " courin and hingin their lugs that gate, the puir

frighted hashes, at an aul' skirlin runt it disna seem to be that owr right i'the min', an she binna makin hersel' a purpose tae fley us wi her houlet's voice and her devilich foresights." He paused a moment as if to consider what he should do to extricate them from their fears. "Odd!—Eh?—I'll gar her set up her yoolughans there, the limmer, an I had ance an arrow;" and he fitted in all haste a shaft to his bow, and made it whistle past the ear of the old lady in the midst of one of her volleys of intelligence from futurity. My documents do not instruct me whether she had at this instant come to the close of her speech, or whether she had an instinctive perception of personal evil; but it is certain she disappeared from the height, and left Angus to boast that "he hadna been lang o' garrin the daft randie tak leg-bail, though the rest o' them had jouket awa like gaeslins frae the gled."

The order of the march was in some danger of being thrown into confusion by this oc-

currence, and the leaders were under little less consternation than their humble followers; in short, they expected nothing less than the immediate assault of all the celestial elements to be rained down on their apostate heads, and began to eye the light clouds which mottled the face of the eastern horizon as the forerunners of destruction. Some of the more savage were for immediately giving up Patrick, and the other abettors of the new religion, to be dealt with according as Brassail and the Druids should determine, and instantly renouncing all connection with their dangerous worship; and though the prince, to whom these designs were whispered, disapproved of their inhumanity, imperious love suggested that it would be a joyful consummation to have the father of Ethne reinstated in his former power.

Saint Patrick, who instantly perceived that all would be lost unless some decisive step were taken, thought himself authorized by the information he had obtained of the situa-

tion of O'Neil, to foretell, that, if they held out, the issue would be fortunate, and as the Vaid had threatened them with the terrors of a tempest, of which he could perceive no indications, he ventured to forebode fair weather. To give more effect to his words, he assembled the chiefs around the king, and made such good use of his over-awing eloquence, that he not only banished their superstitious fears, but buoyed up their spirits with unbounded confidence in the uprightness of the Christian cause. His manner became so warm and animated, indeed, in consequence of the effects he saw produced by the grim hold which superstition kept of their minds, that the soldiery were soon drawn around the little green knoll where the chiefs had assembled, and catching the spirit which he had diffused among their superiors, were soon prepared to listen to the enthusiastic eloquence of the saint; and when he pointed to the bright rising of the sun and the clear blue of the sky as proofs of the old Vaid's false predictions, the

whole multitude shouted aloud, and hastened to begin their march. A multitude, in truth, is more easy to guide than an individual, if there be among them any daring or superior genius to watch the flame of their passions, and cherish or quench it as he sees meet for his designs.

The party which had been sent round by Rossnock Heath to form an ambush for surprising the Rath, had executed their orders with all possible vigilance, having taken advantage of the night to conceal themselves in a very thick part of the adjacent woods, from which, by climbing cautiously to high branches of the tallest trees, they expected to descry every movement which O'Neil's party might make, for the Rath stood loftily above them, and was seen from every part of the forest. This spot had been previously fixed upon by the leader of the expedition, from information obtained from such of his men as were acquainted with the ground, and acted as guides to the rest. It was midnight when

they found themselves quietly seated under the thick interweavings of the wood, and waiting anxiously for the day to commence their attack on the fort, should the king succeed in drawing the strength of the garrison out to defend the sacred grove. As they were so near the enemy, however, it required them to exert every degree of circumspection, and a muster was accordingly made to assign to each his post of danger.

At this muster several were missing, of whom no account could be given by their companions, and it instantly flashed upon them that they were betrayed. Their fears, however, were dissipated when the stragglers arrived with the grateful intelligence, that they had found a spring of water at a little distance, where they had stopt a moment to refresh themselves.

"Is Gullogher with you?" said the commander in a tone of anxiety.

"Why, and he isn't, your honour," said one of the water drinkers, "I'm afear'd he's

far enough in the raer, in respect of spraining his fut again' an ugly piece of a stone on the heath. He walked cruel lame when I seen him last."

The commander concealed his fears as well as he could, and gave orders that all should be ready at a moment's notice. He was unwilling to alarm his men; but he drew no favourable augury from this accident, which was said to have befallen Gullogher, and began to meditate on the best plan of defence should he be attacked by O'Neil. While he paced with solemn step under the umbrage of a large tree, the rustling of the branches above him caught his attention, and the next minute his ears were saluted by the treacherous voice of Gullogher shouting with savage exultation at the success of his villany.

"Now's the time, lads, down with the miscreants!" The war-horn sounded at the same instant, and the ambuscaders were assailed with showers of stones and other weapons, from every bough and branch they had trusted

to for shelter; for the crafty deserter had speedily procured a party at the Rath, and had cunningly placed them among the thick branches of the trees, where he knew the royal ambuscade would station themselves. This concealed foe soon produced such consternation, that the arms of the royalists were of little avail. They covered their heads indeed with their bucklers, and stood thus on the defensive, while they could not repay the assault, as the darkness prevented them from taking aim at the rebels among the trees, even if they had not been shielded by the branches. The darkness had also been favourable to the royalists, for their assailants could only throw down their weapons at random, and few were sufferers from their violence. The commander had not calculated upon this singular mode of attack, but he instantly perceived that they had planned it unskilfully, and withdrew his men, under cover of their bucklers, to a small rising ground he had observed in their first advance. The rebels dropt

from their trees as speedily as possible, but, before they could profit by the panic of their enemy, the commander was prepared for their reception.

They endeavoured to maintain a scattered skirmishing in the wood all night, but the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe prevented much bloodshed, and tended not a little to exasperate the wrath of the combatants, who frequently, when they had taken good aim at what they judged to be an enemy, were greeted with the chuck of their arrows piercing the ribs of an old rotten stump, or of their stones rebounding from the more solid substance of a vigorous tree. The treacherous Gullogher himself, in his eagerness to show his valour, struck his sword with such fell intent on a defenceless ash, that it stuck as fast as the spear of Julius Cæsar of old did in the shield of Cassebelanus, a comparison which all my readers, I doubt not, can well appreciate, as none of them can have neglected to peruse the delectable writings of

Geoffry of Monmouth, who gives a particular detail of the circumstances of that memorable occurrence, not forgetting the triumphant interment of the said Roman spear in the tomb of the British hero.

CHAPTER VIII.

——————— The iron sound
Of our good steeds rings echoing from the ground,
Or, as he blindly works, the mole might strike the ear.

WIELAND'S *Oberon*.

NEITHER party obtained much advantage in this darkling skirmish. The design of the ambush, however, was defeated, of which event a faithful messenger was dispatched by the royalists to apprize the king. O'Neil was exasperated that his party had not routed their opponents, when they had so many advantages, and he was not a man who could tarry to dream and deliberate over his wrath: he instantly mustered every warrior of his band, and leading the way in person, rushed down the steep path into the woods so furi-

ously, that his followers had difficulty in keeping pace with him. He advanced with the same precipitate fury towards the detected ambuscaders, and meditated nothing less than their utter destruction, being resolved to give them no quarter, but make an indiscriminate slaughter to revenge his defeat at Dalriogh. This bloody purpose, however, he found to be grievously obstructed by a strong barricado which the royalists had raised during the night, by help of a quantity of wood which had been recently cut to supply the Rath with fuel and for other purposes. This hasty entrenchment had been constructed with great dexterity by the royalists, one party keeping the enemy at bay, while another worked hard at their wooden defence, and changing duty alternately, with so much caution, that the work was nearly completed by daybreak, and when the furious chief advanced with his whole army to devour the little band, they were well defended from his attack, and determined to sell their lives as dearly as they

could, by annoying the rebels from behind their breast-work.

The wrathful chief was so incensed when his career was thus unexpectedly checked, that he was about to wreck his fury on his own party, who were exhausted from skirmishing all night with men and trees, and who were little less astonished than himself at the activity and foresight of the royalists, when the heat of their pursuit was stopt by the wooden rampart.

"Guard every outlet of this infernal sheep-fold;" cried O'Neil; "let not a soul of the miscreants escape. Where are your fire-brands, you idle loiterers? Get me instantly a thousand faggots." And he added, with a smile of revenge, "We will smoke their beards for them, the audacious rascals.—Come hither, Macrook," he continued, turning to one who stood waiting for orders, "send the rascals a couple of fat sheep to roast for their breakfast."

The rebel chief foresaw no difficulty in

accomplishing their complete destruction; but he had to deal with an old commander, as fertile in devices as he himself was rash and precipitate: experience had taught the veteran to foresee what would be the movements of his opponents, and to be prepared to honour them with a proper reception. Accordingly, when the burning faggots were placed around the barricado, it was found that care had been taken to make use only of green branches for the exterior facing, and consequently the fire made little impression upon them; and O'Neil had the mortification to see his bravest warriors dropping around him from the well-aimed arrows of those whom he had deemed an easy prey. In short, by a succession of skilful manœuvres, the rebel clan was kept in check till past noon, when an occurrence took place which considerably altered the face of affairs.

O'Neil was irritated beyond endurance at the brave outstanding of the royalists, whose well-directed weapons were insensibly weed-

ing away his best soldiers, and even his own fate had more than once been well nigh decided by several keen marksmen, who were anxious to signalize themselves; and he determined to be no longer foiled, if headlong fury would exterminate this band of obstinate desperadoes. He accordingly put himself at the head of a strong body of his fiercest spearmen, and made so violent an assault on the breast-work, that the defenders were driven back with some loss, and he was just upon the point of scaling the barrier when young Fergus burst into the midst of the fray, with perturbation marked in his looks, and so breathless with running, that he could not articulate a word, but pointed his hand wildly towards the Rath. O'Neil had his foot elevated to climb over the breast-work, when the loud murmur excited by the wild flight of Fergus struck his ear like the foreboding croak of a raven, and, looking back without moving his foot, he cried,

"Death and fury! what growling is that?

Advance you owl-throated minions, and tear these pitiful wretches in pieces!"

Fergus having somewhat recovered his breathing, interrupted this passionate speech by single words, pronounced at panting intervals,

"Stop!—the Rath!—stop! O father!—the Rath!—the king!"

"The devil!" roared out the furious chief, "what king? what Rath? you are bewitched, Fergus."

"O father, Logaire is advancing with his whole army,—haste back, or all is over with us!"

"Every man instantly to the Rath, under pain of immediate death," shouted the stern chieftain, and he himself was already a bow-shot away before he had pronounced the hasty order, and sprung through the wood with the most precipitate speed. He was the first man who reached the gate, through which he darted like a thunder-bolt, and the next instant appeared on the top of the front turret

to animate, with his voice, the haste of his more tardy followers, who were now streaming up the pass among the trees in the utmost confusion, with a troop of Logaire's horse pressing hard in their rear, and cutting down the stragglers with their swords. The horsemen, however, were too late to seize upon the unguarded Rath, for the purpose of which they had been dispatched by the king, the moment he was informed that his ambuscade had been surprised. The activity of young Fergus, who perceived their design, when returning from the Arch-Druid's, completely defeated it, and even was like to involve the destruction of the royalist party who had been entrusted with its execution; for Fergus no sooner perceived that his father had already secured a sufficient garrison to maintain the safety of their fortress, than he rallied the warriors in the rear, and, by a rapid evolution, lined the range of woods on each side of the path with bowmen and sling-

ers,* who gave the royal cavalry such warm greetings, that they were glad to pause before they ventured further up the height. Fergus himself was indefatigable; he shot from one point of danger to another like an eagle, and showed a bravery and a wisdom beyond even the veteran chiefs of the clan. In the hurry of the outset, they had placed themselves behind the trees and bushes at random, and assailed the royalists successively as they advanced, but this was a slow mode of warfare; and Fergus, who inherited somewhat of his father's hasty impatience, determined by one grand stroke to destroy the whole party at once.

There was in the windings of the path, not far from the scene of conflict, a narrow way, flanked on one side by a rock covered with brushwood, and on the other by thick branchy trees. The advantages of this pass Fergus

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* See Montfaucon, Antiq. Tome IV. Tab. I. and Walker's Memoirs.

immediately perceived. He drew his men gradually from their scattered positions, and concentrated them all among the brushwood on the rock, and by well planned feints, he soon led his foes into the dangerous defile, and in an instant overpowered them, when they least expected it, with a galling discharge of every species of missile weapon, amongst which were large pieces of the rock that crushed every thing in their descent, and left men and horses strewed along the pass, and choking the defile with their mangled bodies. Those who escaped the carnage made a precipitate retreat, and left their wounded companions in the hands of their foes. Their leader, whose name was Ossory, had his horse killed under him, and stood in despair at his loss. He determined not to fly, but die nobly, since he could not overcome. Fergus saw him from his station on the rock above, and from his wild looks divined his purpose, and the next moment stood before him like

a youthful vision of Mars bursting from a cloud.

"You have fought bravely, Sir," said Fergus, "and I am unwilling to shed more blood; you are at liberty to withdraw from the field to collect the remains of your brave followers."

Fergus spoke with the ardour of youth, and with all its unclouded frankness; but Ossory, unaccustomed to such plain dealing, thought the beardless boy was taunting him for his cowardice, and he was just on the point of rushing forward to cut out his licentious tongue; but checked himself when he thought of the youth of Fergus—and did not deign to reply but with a scowl of mingled contempt and bitterness. Fergus perceived what was passing in his mind, and resumed.

"Nothing was farther from my thoughts than to insult you. I repeat my offer of safety; but if you wish not to retreat, you shall be well treated at the Rath."

"Cease your damn'd chattering, you re-

bel's cub!" cried the defeated chieftain, "otherwise I shall mince your young flesh for the crows!"

"With this slight proviso---if you are able," retorted Fergus, and stood on his defence with all the determined courage of an old soldier and the fire of buoyant youth.

Ossory rushed upon him with his sword, with the intention of hewing him in pieces with the first stroke; but his blade descended on the buckler of a soldier who had darted forward to save his young master, and, at the same time, an arrow from behind a bush entered the old chieftain's arm, and the sword fell from his grasp. Fergus was much chagrined that their officiousness had prevented him from trying his strength, and hung down his head with shame before the wounded hero; for he had wished for nothing more eagerly than an opportunity to signalize himself, which was thus so hopelessly snatched from him. He never thought of his own green youth and the firm strung arm of the veteran.

It was, however, vain to fret, and he ordered the offending soldiers to carry the wounded leader to the Rath, and pay him every attention.

These occurrences, of which he was soon informed, caused the king to alter his design of attacking and detroying the sacred grove till he had made an attempt to carry Rath-na-Carraig by a vigorous assault. With this intention he advanced with his whole army, to which the fugitive Grougar acted as a guide. The severe treatment, however, which the royalists had already met with in the woods, taught the king to be cautious for the future, lest his whole army might be entrapt and destroyed. There was one approach to the Rath which was considerably free of woods, being only encumbered, at intervals, with straggling patches of dwarf birch and stunted willow bushes; but then it was also obstructed with soft marshy ground, where the footing of the infantry would be very unsure, and the cavalry could not pass at all.

Besides, there was a steep rugged rock to scale, in the face of a determined foe, even should they clear all these inconveniences in safety. This, however, was judged to be the least of two dangers, and it was forthwith resolved to attempt the passage of the marsh, while the cavalry should make a feint as if they meant to pass the woods, and attack the Rath on the other side.

O'Neil no sooner perceived these movements, than he drew up a double file of archers and slingers on the edge of the rock which the king meant to scale; and, at the same time, sent orders to Fergus to maintain his position at the narrow pass in the wood. In consequence of these arrangements, he confided in his security, particularly as his men were in high spirits from the successful attack which young Fergus had made on Ossory's troop. But an accident occurred, which taught the sanguine chief that military ardour is as easily quenched as kindled, particularly when superstition prevails. In their eager-

ness to obtain the post of honour, on the summit of the rock, two of the bowmen advanced nearer the brink of it than they could maintain their balance, and fell down on the rugged precipice below, where they were dashed to pieces in sight of both armies. O'Neil's men all shrunk back with horror from the awful portent, firmly believing that it was a marked instance of the displeasure of the Gods towards their enterprise. Nay, some of the more gloomy and superstitious threw down their weapons, and refused to dare heaven any longer, by opposing its decrees. The army of Logaire, on the other hand, who were picking their way through the marsh, hailed the omen with a shout which echoed through the woods around them like the roar of a storm, and reached even the undaunted Fergus, in his woody lurking-place. Logaire's soldiers all turned their eyes on Saint Patrick, who still kept close by the king, and gave him all the credit of the accident which had thus elevated their hopes. They recol-

lected his prediction that they would overcome, and they referred all to the good man's influence with heaven: they knew not that his mind was filled with grief at the bloodshed which had already taken place; and that he was in the very act of praying for peace when the bowmen fell from the rock. The thoughts of Prince Malthuine had been driven hither and thither, like the agitation of a tempest, during the whole march. He was determined to save Ethne's father, when his destruction was resolved on, at the expence of his own life; for every thing connected with her now twined itself with his thoughts; but he was equally resolved to sacrifice his rival, O'Neil, if he could by any valorous deed accomplish it; and his despondency, in her absence, was only brightened with the hope of thus gloriously winning her, by removing this grand obstacle. The ominous shout of the soldiers around him roused him like a clap of thunder, from a despairing reverie into which the difficulties which opposed their advance had

thrown him, and he sprung to the front ranks in a moment, and forced his way through a thicket of stunted birches, which crossed their path.

O'Neil was more like a fiend than a man when he saw all his men gloomy and disheartened, and several of them throwing down their arms. The first who dared to give this proof of his cowardice, the stern chief seized by the throat with terrible grasp, and pitched him over the rock after his companions.

"The number three shall make the omen fortunate, you goose-headed fools," he muttered wrathfully through his teeth. "Are there any more of you who wish to dance the war-jig on the cliffs?" He looked about him, and saw the rest reluctantly picking up their weapons, and moving, with fearful and tardy steps, to resume their stations.

The king's army was advancing slowly through the marsh, and had nearly reached the bottom of the rocks which run shelving up from the plain to the Rath, and were so

rough with knobs and juttings, that if they had not been annoyed by their foes above, they would have easily surmounted them; and these foes, they soon observed, were not hearty in the cause of opposition, so that they hoped to be able to dislodge the daring rebel, and check the spread of defection.

While Logaire was just about to mount the first shelvings of the rock, an express arrived from Tara, that Kriomthan, the king of Leinster, had taken the field with a numerous army, and was expected every day to make an attack upon the palace, to free himself from the indignity of paying the *Boroimhe* tribute, which the Leinstrians had been hitherto burdened with. You may easily guess Logaire's consternation when he received this information. A council was convened in an instant; they made the army halt; and, before night, they were on their march to the south, to save, if possible, the beautiful palace of Tara; and, if not, to chastise the Leinstrians for the daring insult.

O'Neil was puzzled extremely to find out the cause of this rapid movement, but at once judged it to be a feint on the part of the king to throw him off his guard, and take him by surprise. He had, however, a moment's leisure to interrogate Fergus concerning the answer of Brassail to his message.

"The Arch-druid says," replied the youth, "that a traitor must be sacrificed to the sea in order to insure success."

"I divined as much," said O'Neil, scoffingly, "these infernal sacrifices are never out of his old doting brain. Did you ask him in return, why the gods whom he had previously gorged with human victims, permitted us to be defeated at Dalriogh? Hark ye, Fergus, I believe these sacrifices are all a damn'd flam, to gull such pale-livered poltroons as these who started back with ghost-faces when their comrades fell over the rock there."

"It was your own command, father," said

the youth, "to spare no expence in procuring the aid of the gods."

"Gods!—devils!—" cried the irritated chief, "I want none of them;—but,—yes, he must be indulged in his crazed whimsies, or I may lose the assistance of these gulled woodcocks, who think himself no less than a god. Macrook! see what prisoners have been lodged in the Uaimh."

"There's none at all, sir," said Macrook, "only the spalpeen Grougar, that deserted when never a one seen him, that's at the Samh'in, your honour."

"Send him under a strong guard to the Arch-Druid, he will teach him to desert his post," were the cold-blooded orders of O'Neil. That chief, however, seemed to have something besides working deeply in his mind, which he wished to tell Fergus; and yet he was as loth to be explicit, as a maid of fifteen when she is first urged to compassionate a lover, asking the youth a number of questions,

which had no evident connection. At last they began to be more pointed; such as,

"Would you like, my dear boy, to see Albyn? It is the land of warriors."

"I like better," said the youth, "to fight along with our own clan. If we succeed in this enterprise, I should then be glad to converse with the brave heroes on the opposite shore."

"Right, but will we succeed? Let me tell you, Fergus, I do not value that old fool's predictions a custard."

"But dear father, I forgot to tell you, that Calye Mulloy, the Vaid of Dunluce, foretold, with awful threatenings, the destruction of the king's army."

"Did she?" said O'Neil, anxiously, "there is more dependence to be put in her. But did you ever hear of the wonderful prophet of Albyn? I am on the rack to know what he would say. It is reported he knows the future, as well as the present time."

"Is it Merlin you mean?" said Fergus,

who now guessed the aim of his father's disjointed questions.

"The same," replied the chief; "if I could get any trusty messenger to go to him, I should set my mind at rest."

"I shall set out instantly, father," said Fergus, "if you will procure me a guide."

This was precisely what O'Neil had wished, as there was no one to whom he could trust so much as to Fergus, young though he was; but he did not like to impose upon him such a journey, contrary to his own inclination. He was rejoiced, therefore, to hear his ready declaration to undertake it, without being directly solicited. Superstition, indeed, wrought on the mind of the chieftain, in a manner rather singular. He had a distrust in the druidical rites and predictions, which recurred and disappeared with circumstances, and often for no assignable reason but caprice. The forewarnings of the Calye Vaid stood somewhat higher in his opinion; but he had of late set his mind upon

Merlin, as an infallible prophet, whom nobody could with safety disbelieve, although this was the first time he had disclosed his thoughts on that momentous subject. He had likewise become anxious to know, whether he should ever recover his betrothed Ethne; not from love, but from a dark conception that his marriage would influence his affairs, inconsistently thinking that the gods to whom she was devoted, and whom he occasionally reviled, would, for her sake, shower down success upon every mad design he might devise; and this was one of the chief points on which he wished to obtain the prediction of the renowned Caledonian prophet.

My patient readers must be content to wait a little longer, and in good time they shall hear what became of the fair Ethne; how the king fought with the Leinstrians; how the Arch-Druid disposed of poor Grougar; how Saint Patrick founded churches; and will be gratified with a peep at the royal palace of Tara, and may possibly accompany

young Fergus in a trip to Albyn, to visit the famous prophet Merlin. But they must allow me to introduce these important things in my own way, which, unfortunately for them, happens to be none of the straightest.

CHAPTER IX.

" Mute stares the knight, like one in sweet surprise,
" Who seeks, when roused from fascinating dreams,
" If true, the vision that before him gleams,
" Or all a nightly shape that in a moment dies."

WIELAND'S *Oberon*, II.

THE wrinkled inhabitants of Dunluce cased in their rough exterior some of the finest feelings of human nature. They were, indeed, savagely superstitious; but they were hospitable, and kind hearted, and pitiful, perhaps, because, in their secluded dwellings, these blessed attributes acquired strength for lack of exercise, and burst from them involuntarily, when distress or misfortune claimed their aid. But the misfortunes of Ethne, the beloved daughter of the Arch-Druid, and herself consecrated to the service of the gods,

were such as they could not have dreamed of; and had so strong an effect on some of the astonished sisterhood, that they could do nothing but gape and stare, and hold up their hands to heaven. When the first fit of wonder was over, however, they showed her all the kindness and attention which so distinguished a guest merited. Even Calye Mulloy herself, with all her strange exhibition of wild dignity and unbending distance, was moved to see the plight of the young Druidess; but it was her system to allow no symptom of such sort of weakness to appear before her inferiors: She thought her power and authority would vanish, whenever she seemed to feel like other mortals, or whenever she acknowledged, by look or gesture, the superiority of another. Ethne, indeed, was of a higher order than the Vaid; but the Vaid was her senior in years, and moreover, was in her own sanctuary, where she sat supreme.

Ethne required all the soothings of kind-

ness to uphold her sinking spirits, and kindness was lavished on her without measure; yet she remained restless and thoughtful, pondering alternately on the departure of the prince, and the affliction of her father. While it was still the grey of morning, she rose from the pillow where she had reclined, but not slept, during a long tedious night; for every wave that broke on the beach, sounded in her ear like the death knell of the prince, and of the brave man who had twice rescued her from destruction; as she still believed they were at sea, though this was the second morning from their departure. She had sat all day on the peak of a rock, lost in bewildering conjecture as to their fate, though the sea was unusually calm, and the weather fine: she knew nothing of their joining the army, and the Calye never made any body the wiser for *her* knowledge. Ethne had gone through the requisite lustrations, under the superintendence of her wild entertainers; but in this ceremony, as in

every thing else now, her mind was passive, and she took little note of what was passing around her. The departure of the prince, indeed, had disclosed to her, that her heart was more deeply touched than she had thought possible, particularly as she had tried to preserve her reluctant affections for her betrothed chieftain. She now began to recollect so many flaws in her behaviour, which belied this determination, that she blushed as she sat alone on the rugged cliff; and often she looked to the shoreless horizon in the north, with the wish, rising by fits into a hope, that the boats might (for what purpose she never thought) return to Dunluce.

In this state of mind she wandered down the rocks which descended to the beach. It was ebb tide, and she roamed thoughtfully about till she found herself on the main land, at a distance from Dunluce, having crossed the rocks, which, it may be remembered, are covered at high water by the sea. Her wandering, however, was not without aim, al-

though she tried to make herself believe so; for there was a certain point of the shore which audaciously checked the range of her view, and she had a secret longing to discover what lay behind it; yet she could scarcely believe either, that the prince's boats might have taken shelter there; or, more dreadful still, might have struck on the rocks during the night. All these fancies, and many more, passed through her mind; but she imagined, notwithstanding, that she was wandering at random, when she took the direction of the point, and seemed not to detect her self-deception, till she had doubled the high jutting eminence which formed it: so dexterous is the mind in veiling its own darling wishes from itself, when other motives and other wishes oppose their feebler strength.

She had secretly desired that she might descry the boats from this high point, but when she had surmounted it, the same solitary sheet of water had presented itself to her view, as that which spread around Dun-

luce, and the shore itself was equally waste and unpeopled, except by straggling herds of cattle which fed undisturbed in the valley. "I shall never see him more," she sighed from the fulness of her heart, and cast a mournful eye on the distant waters. The trampling, as she thought, of a herd of cattle behind her, roused her a moment from her melancholy; yet she still looked wishingly on the solitude of the ocean, from which she seemed unwilling to raise her eye. The trampling came nearer: she turned to look, and Prince Malthuine leapt from a panting steed, and threw himself at her feet.

Their emotions were too violent to find vent in words, but the heaving and beating of their hearts spoke more eloquently than the most impassioned language. The prince raised his timid look to the lovely vision which stood before him, to implore forgiveness for his intrusion; yet, still his voice refused its utterance, and his whole frame was shaken with a tremor he could not repress, for at

this moment Ethne looked more divinely beautiful than he had ever beheld her. The paleness which fatigue and misfortune had imprinted on her cheek, mingled with the blush which rose and glowed there with all the warm eloquence of love. Even the dark ringlets which fell over her brow, and streamed in waving links on her fair neck, seemed to speak the language of love, they looked so beautiful, and played so wooingly around her lovely countenance, throwing by turns their glossy curls over her blushing cheek, as if to veil its loveliness, and again in wanton sport shifting with the light breath of the sea-breeze, and revealing the timid crimson which shrunk from the gaze while it deepened to the eye of the enraptured lover. It was thus his fancy had pictured her when he stood at midnight on the high bank of the Coluisge, and looked toward her sea-beat dwelling; and the vision had haunted him even in the turmoil of his war-march, and had so wrought upon his mind, that he had left all to taste once more

the rapture of beholding her before he tore himself away from the land of her abode. He came to bid her farewell for ever; for, to this he had striven to school his heart, in consideration of the commotions which distracted the kingdom. He loved to madness; but he would sacrifice his life rather than be the cause of farther embroiling the state in civil contention. So he had brought himself to resolve, as he spurred his steed towards Dunluce. He had only to look on the lovely maid, to drive every thought and resolution from his soul; for he only saw her,—he only thought of her,—and every other earthly thing vanished from his remembrance. He spoke not, for his heart was overcome, but he seized her hand with hurried wildness, and looked on her with such melting frenzy, that she feared his reason had given way to distraction.

"I'll not leave you!" were the first words he could utter in a low stifled voice, and he kept his eye fixed on her countenance with

so much tenderness, that it wore the semblance of thoughtless vacancy.

" Ethne, I cannot leave you," he added, while the beautiful Druidess stood in speechless confusion. She essayed to raise him from his knees; for she could not bear to see her prince so humble himself, though she could not repress her delight that he had not forgotten her.

" I will not rise till you promise to be mine for ever," he cried, in a more determined voice than he had yet been able to exert, and a look more frantic than he had yet shown.

" You distress me, my dear prince, beyond what I can bear," said the lovely maid, in the utmost confusion.

" Then, my love, I shall never distress you more," and he rose hurriedly, and was about to run headlong into the sea, but she held his hand, which had been insensibly locked in hers from the moment he had dismounted from his steed, and restrained him

from his mad design with so much sweetness, that he again sunk down on the grass entranced in painful joy. When he had become somewhat less agitated, she ventured to remonstrate with him on his folly.

"You know," she said, "that I am betrothed, and cannot plight my faith to another in my present circumstances. All I can do I will; should these circumstances ever alter, I will never give this hand to any other than my prince."

"Swear to that," he cried frantically, "and I ask no more."

"If my simple word will not content you,—will you accept of this?" and she held out to him her hand, trembling with agitation.

He fondly accepted the pledge, and pressed it to his burning lips.

"Now, my dear prince," she said, "you must leave me, for, if we are observed, it may be worse for us both; you have nothing to fear from my pledge. But stay, you must have something to keep you in remembrance

of it;" and she took from her finger a ring of native gold, and put it on his. * He was so transported with joy that he threw his arms around her, and ravished a kiss from her lips, while she gently reproached him by saying,

"This is too much,—you know I am yet betrothed."

But she had given herself so completely to the delusion of love, that his boldness was easily forgiven; and many a sweet farewell they took, and often returned, after they had *finally* parted, to repeat the same words which they had already repeated a hundred times over. At last, the prince made a desperate struggle to rend himself from the enchantment of her looks, threw himself on his horse, and darted away at a rapid gallop beyond the heights, his heart buoyant with the hope of

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* For the antiquity of rings, see Vallency's Vind. of the Anc. Hist. of Ireland, p. 349.

one day possessing the hand of the beautiful Druidess.

Ethne gazed after him as long as he remained in view, and then sped her way to the shore, to muse over the rash pledge she had been forced to give him without the concurrence of her dear father. But whenever she began to reproach herself for giving way to her weakness, the image of the prince rose to her fancy, kneeling disconsolate at her feet, and bathing her hand with his tears. "My father," she thought, "if he had seen the youth so overpowered with love to me, would have himself become his advocate; and I have not violated the promise he gave to ——" she would have said O'Neil, but she could not bring herself to introduce his name, when her mind was filled with the image of the youthful and impassioned prince, and she turned her thoughts to the loss of the parchments which engrossed all the thoughts she could steal from love.

She perceived not that she had wandered

far from Dunluce; for her mind was too much agitated to take notice of the feeble hints which the senses conveyed, of the existence of external things; nor did she well know how far she was gone, or where she was, till she was roused by the shrill voice of Calye Mulloy, performing one of its loudest screeches among the rocks on the beach below her. It was no ordinary event surely, which called forth such expenditure of voice and breath from the superior of the Druid Nunnery; and agitated as Ethne was with her own concerns, she could not hear it unmoved. Whether it was a cry of terror, or surprise, or a burst of sudden joy, the sound itself gave no indication, having no resemblance to any earthly sound whatever, and Ethne recognised it to be the Vaid's voice, only by its likeness to itself, when the boats first put in at Dunluce. Ethne hastened to the beach, to learn what had befallen her hostess of the rock; but in this, for the present, she was unexpectedly disappointed, for, before she

reached the creek whence the cry had arisen, Calye Mulloy was out at sea, and manfully paddling the curragh, which had lately been the property of poor Grougar, now in durance; and which, with the skiff, had been abandoned in their haste to join the king.

What the Vaid meant by this singular movement, Ethne could not conjecture. She called to her, but the old dame either did not or did not wish to hear, and made no answer, but plied her oar with as much dexterity, as a goose does its web-feet in making way through the water. She made straight for Dunluce, and thither Ethne followed her on shore, somewhat anxious to learn the cause of the singular cry, and dreading that it betokened her no good: for when the passions are afloat, a strong suspicion of danger or disappointment always finds its way to the mind, to damp the ardour of its desires.

Calye Mulloy had reached Dunluce before the fair Druidess, and was shut up in her sanctorum, so that no one durst approach

her. There was, notwithstanding, on these occasions, a strong spirit of curiosity prevalent among the inferior sisterhood, which manifested itself in whispers and conjectures about the Vaid's meditations. A younger sister had once ventured to inspect a chink in the door, if mayhap she might penetrate the sacred mysteries which her superior was so anxious to conceal; but from want of precaution, the young eaves-dropper was herself discovered, with her eye applied to the unlucky chink, and being unpityingly sentenced to be chained in that very place and position for a whole moon, and it was in December; and afterwards to be tied every tide for another moon, to a post within the sea-mark, so as the water might only reach her arm-pits, and not drown her outright. The rigorous sentence, rigorously executed, had operated so effectually *in terrorem* of all whom it concerned, that the Vaid was ever after left to pursue her rites and her meditations undisturbed.

Her arrival in the curragh, however, her unusual air of mystery, and her immediate retreat to her sanctorum, were the cause of divers similar appearances among her inferiors. They began all to assume a look of intelligence, and performed sundry nods and winks, so well fitted into the pauses of their whispers, that an on-looker would have concluded they were all privy to an important secret. But as it usually happens among the wise and learned, the various members of the sisterhood had each formed her own opinion of the momentous event, and, unfortunately for conjecture, they were all wrong, though one of the more fearless of them had ventured a hint, which had several times been amply confirmed on former occasions of a like kind, viz. "That the Vaid was in one of her miffs." Now, the beauty of this hint consisted in its extensive application; for the objective member of the proposition was so cunningly constructed, that the hinter could bring herself off triumphantly in al-

most every possible case. How comfortable it is, to have such a neat little word as *miff* on trying occasions, my antiquarian brethren are well aware.

Ethne inquired, to no purpose, if anything evil had befallen their superior; she could extract no answer but what was couched in "nods and becks," and—not "wreathed smiles," but contorted wrinkles; and these dumb shows were not made much clearer by the timid whispers that circulated about like the sound of a whirlwind encountering a field of withered grass. I shall leave it to the learned to discover whether, in this case, it is the wind or the windlestraws which are principally concerned in producing this sound, as both have had their partisans among philosophers of no small name; a blunt friend of mine thinks "that both may have a hand in it." Be this as it may, Ethne found the nods and whispers of the sisterhood equally unintelligible, as most of my readers would find the learned arguments adduced concerning

the sound alluded to, for which reason I have consulted their convenience by omitting them.

By this time, I fear, you will be ready to exclaim with the facetious author of the Polemo-Middinia

Mons-Meg clockitur et wee midgeum ejumpat sub illa.

Of which exquisite verse, the following is thought to be a fine *general* rendering by a *general* amateur, who has more than once evinced his *general* talents in his *peculiar* travesties of some of the Hebrew Melodies:

A hillock *labours*—no,—a mouse,
And lo! it bringeth forth—a louse.

But I can assure you, that you never quoted a verse in your life which applied so ill to the matter in hand; for it was not a small nor a common matter that could produce such singular effects on Calye Mulloy, who was ever on her guard against surprises, as it became a dame of her order to be; and, moreover,

she never indulged her voice in its natural altitude except upon grand occasions, a circumstance quite satisfactory to prove the present one was of this kind.

In truth, the Calye had no particular liking to the salutation with which Angus had had the temerity to greet her: not that she disliked arrows, considered merely as such, and lying quietly in a quiver; but she did dislike, with strong repugnance and antipathy, to have them shot point blank in her face, and what woman would not? She had, accordingly, departed instantly from the height above the Coluisge when the horrid weapon whizzed by her ear, as she had no wish to have the daring insult to her sacred person repeated. She had a prodigious longing, notwithstanding, —and it was very natural,—to retaliate on the bodies of all the warriors belonging to the king; for her revenge, like a piece of Indian rubber, was exceedingly stretchable. How to bring her vengeance to bear upon so powerful a force was another question, for she had

already failed in throwing them into consternation by her denouncing on them the wrath of Heaven, and this was the very summit of her climax, which had never failed her before. She was consequently forced to search for some more effectual instrument of annoyance, and took her way to the shore to mingle her musings with the roar of the waves, as Demosthenes of old was wont to do his speeches. The day passed on, however, and eke the night, which was more wonderful still, and nothing of a practicable nature occurred to her tortured fancy; but she was resolved not to give in for lack of invention, and rose with the creak of day to take advantage of the morning sea breeze, which has, in all ages, been reputed of sovereign virtue in deficiencies of the brain, whether these manifest themselves in lentor, obliviousness, or siccity.

She had got before Ethne, so that she did not see her interview with the prince; but she made no more progress than heretofore, in inventing a plan to cut off the king's ar-

my, root and branch, for she wisely thought, with Herod and with Louis XIV. when he signed the death warrants of the parrots and jackdaws, that since she did not know the individual offender, it would be the surest way to put them all on her prescriptive list without distinction. It is wonderful that the assistance of O'Neil did not strike her at first; but she had her reasons for distrusting that chief; besides, she wished to have the sole and unparticipated glory of destroying the army herself. Unluckily, she was not gifted like Sampson, the son of Manoah, and she was just about to give way to despondency, when she arrived at the little creek, where her voice had discovered her to the young Druidess. Here she found the abandoned boats of the fugitive royalists, and began to examine them with great care, to escape from the humiliating reflection that she could not vent her revenge, by employing herself busily in *something*,—a device of wonderful effect to hide our thoughts from ourselves.

And was it only the finding of the boats that we have been tormented with so long? a very important event truly to scream about! Stop, gentle reader, we are not come to the scream yet. If you will have patience, we shall come to *it* by and by.

CHAPTER X.

Τες δ' ἐνθα δ' αὐτες ὀντας ἀνθρωποκτονες
Εις τον θεον το φαυλον ἀναφερειν δοκω·
Ουδενα γαρ ὀιμαι δαιμονων ἐιναι κακον.

EURIP. *Iphigen.*

He who believes the gods delight to see
A human victim bleeding at their altars,
Ascribes to them his own dark cruel nature.

Transl. from GÖETHE'S
Iphigenia in Tauris, Act I.

I BELIEVE that the superior of a modern nunnery would not task herself to scream on any less occasion than the accidental contact of her veil and the flame of her lamp. The manners of that class of persons, however, were somewhat different fourteen hundred years ago, as you must have already remarked; and Calye Mulloy gave that genuine sig-

nal of female surprise, when, in turning over some withered fern on the seats in the prince's skiff, her eyes fell upon the sacred blue envelope of the mystic parchments, which Ethne had dropt when she fell into the sea, and which had been given up as lost. Instinct or intuition, or a rapid process of reasoning, as a certain man of Ethics would call it, immediately taught her, that she would be unsafe to venture along the shore with so valuable a prize, in the present disturbed state of things; and as she could not manage the skiff, she threw herself into the curragh, and steered homewards in all haste, deeming herself fortunate beyond all the other Vaids who ever lived in Dunluce.

The finding of the parchments, indeed, was of more value to her at this moment, than any other earthly consideration; for, by means of their magic power, she had no doubt of making Logaire and his whole army walk either into the sea or loch Neagh, and drown themselves, with all due obedience to the authority

of the spells. To execute this benevolent deed, (for she reckoned it the highest benevolence to destroy infidels,) she forthwith repaired, like Boiardo's Marfisa, "gatta, fiera, cruda, dispietata," to her secret domicile, and began the necessary incantations. Some of these she had already tried, but they were not of sufficient power: and she was now sure she could not fail, she had heard so many apposite instances of the wonders effected by the spells in the Blue Book of Tralooney, the designation by which these parchments were known to the Druids.

I have sometimes thought that human hopes are not unlike a fresh looking parcel of clouds, which hover with dewy stillness over a thirsty corn-field, as if about to sprinkle its wasting verdure with their showers; but, all at once, they roll imperceptibly away, and pour out their fulness on the bosom of the thankless ocean. So it fared with Calye Mulloy; for, in making the necessary trials, she found her foundling charm-book not a whit more effica-

cious than those she had vainly tried before. She sat in patient anxiety, turning from one leaf to another, like a young monk with his breviary, whose knowledge of his letters is not over bright; and she fixed her keen black eyes on one sentence, and then on another, muttering them backwards and across, but still no sign of power made itself manifest.

"Heaven's curses light on them!" she growled, as she threw aride her magical apparatus in wrath: "That old obstinate dotard Fate is turned champion for apostacy; but if our Gods do not avenge me in this when I have set my heart upon it, I will henceforth renounce their service, and betake myself to the keeping of sheep."

She bethought herself, however, before resigning her high office, of mentioning her distress to her fair guest; for, although she never condescended to take counsel from the inmates of the rock, Ethne was of sufficient rank to secure her dignity from degradation. She was accordingly summoned in all haste,

and allowed to enter the mysterious sanctuary of the Vaid, the inner parts of which had not been profaned by human foot but her own for many years.

The joy of Ethne was unbounded when she again beheld the sacred packet which had given her so much distress; and she could not give any intelligible reply to the questions which the Vaid impatiently asked.

"I shall go to my father this very instant," she cried, seizing the packet with an eagerness which drew from the Vaid a piercing stare; "and you must go with me, my good hostess, to receive his blessing."

The Vaid had wished to secure the blessed effects of the packet in thundering vengeance on her insulters, before she entrusted any body with the knowledge that it was in her possession; but since she had been foiled in this, she was compelled to acquiesce in Ethne's proposal, and ordering two of the most active of the sisterhood to attend them in quality of maids in waiting, they set out

immediately from the grove; Ethne, with her heart beating with gladness, and the Calye meditating grimly on plans of vengeance. Her wrath was nothing quieted by the journey; for, on crossing the Coluisge, the scene of her morning adventure came impertinently back to her recollection, there being stronger links of association, than the little green risings over which she had wandered, in the numerous black circles strewed with ashes, which the fires of the soldiers had left along the brook, and the scattered bones of the animals on which they had feasted. Ethne's associations would have also brightened here, had she known of the solitary walk the prince had indulged on these heights to muse on his love. Of this she did not think, but pictured him at the evening feast, as the only object in the circle round the watch-fire, which was worthy of a moment's thought. The joy, however, of having found the parchments robbed the prince of his usual share in her thoughts; it being the established form of

etiquette in the court of the Passions, that the latest comer takes precedence of all others.

They had now left the Coluisge, and their several associations, behind them in the distance, and were advancing along the shore of Binguthar, when their ears were greeted with solemn music rising in the air from a remoter part of the shore. The doubling beat of the tambour was first perceived, and, as they advanced, the loud blare of trumpets and bugle-horns was heard swelling in conjunction with the clarinet, and other instruments of music. The scene over which this concerto floated imparted to it a grandeur, which, of itself, it could not have possessed; for the mingling sounds were repeated by every mountain echo from Dunluce to Bengore, and spread along the boundless sea, till they melted into silence.

"Methinks," said the Vaid, "those are the sounds of war; did you not, daughter, say, that the apostate king was gone southward?"

" I learned so," replied Ethne; " but my " ear deceives me if that is war music; its " slow measured tones seem rather to indicate " a sacrifice."

They were not long left in doubt, for, on reaching the summit of the next rising ground, they saw in the valley before them a long train, not of soldiers, but of priests and musicians walking in slow procession towards the shore. The venerable Arch-Druid was the most striking figure in the train, and led the way with solemn step. His long white robe, " candore nitentia claro," * which hung its rich folds profusely around him, was an emblem of untarnished purity. He supported his steps with a long staff of the same colour. On his head he wore a wreath of ivy, above which a radiated golden crescent rose conspicuous. † His hair and beard were long and

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* Prudentius in Hymn.

† See Walker's Essay on the Dress of the Irish, Pl. III. Fig. 4.

flowing, and of a silver-grey. He kept his eyes raised to heaven, while he walked solemnly along, as if he were unconscious of the earthly things around him. Behind him came the inferior Druids in triple order, each bearing a long white rod.* The musicians followed, fantastically dressed, and ranged in a circular form, in centre of which was the unfortunate Grougar, the victim of their horrid superstition, wrapt in a black mantle, with a hood that fell over his face to conceal the features, and give that air of mystery in which the Druids delighted. On the heights around were straggling parties of peasants, whom the sound of the music had brought thither to be spectators of the ceremony, which was not a common one, grand sacrifices being usually performed in the dark recesses of the grove.

Ethne was so overjoyed to see her father

* This Druidical custom of carrying white rods is, or was lately, retained in a certain procession at Oxford. Brand, Popul. Antiq. p. 299.

again, that she had almost forgotten the sacredness of the ceremonies in which he was engaged, and was upon tiptoe to run and embrace him, had she not been withheld by Calye Mulloy, who had more presence of mind than the lively passions of the young Druidess permitted her to exert. It would have been sacrilege, indeed, to interrupt the performance of the rites, and the travellers submitted to be spectators of the scene.

The procession took the way of the shore, and kept at the same solemnity of pace till they arrived at a narrow opening into the sea through the rent of a high cliff, whose walls rose loftily on each side of them, and seemed to look blacker from the contrast of the white robes of the Druids. It was now the influx of the tide, and the waters were gradually rising with their usual turbulence over the *debris* of the rocks; they had even, by continued washing on sundry globe-looking rocks, worn away a portion from several of the outer coatings, so that the whole might have been

imagined to be a quantity of gigantic onions turned by magic into sable stone. On these stone globes certain Druids were appointed to take their station, as these, like all other singular appearances of nature, were held to be sacred.

The tide had not yet reached a cavern which the sea had worn into the rocks on the right of the procession, and which was to be the scene of the horrid sacrifice; but the waves were rapidly swelling towards the rugged entrance, and would soon fill all its recesses with their wild turmoil. The left wall of the cavern had been left thin by the falling down of the adjacent rock; of which circumstance Brassail had taken advantage to make a lateral entrance into the inner recess, by cutting through the wall.* It was in this

* This cavern is one of the things always shown to those who visit the Giant's Causeway. It can only be entered at ebb tide: in a storm, the waves break into it with awful fury. The onion rocks also are still to be seen.

horrid cavern that victims were sacrificed to Onvana, the Goddess of the Sea; and it was here that the procession had now led another unfortunate wretch to perish in the waters.

Brassail advanced to the side entrance with his feet uncovered, kneeling, and bowing his head at intervals in adoration of the goddess. The other Druids opened their ranks on each side, as far as the ruggedness of the ground would permit, to allow the victim to be brought forth. The musicians struck up their loudest notes to drown the wretch's cries, and came forward to where Brassail was waiting to receive them. The victim was seized by two grim Druids, and stript of his black mantle; Brassail then put on his head a fillet of sea weeds, and poured out on it a vessel of perfumed oil. The poor fellow struggled hard with the savage priests who held him, and shrieked most piteously when he saw through the side-passage the strife of the coming waters, dashing their spray and their white foam over its rugged vault. The priests, however, held

him fast, and the musicians strove to drown his wild screams with their trumpets and tambours, while he was pushed naked into the jaws of the horrid cavern. The waves were now boiling in all their fury, and broke with awful dash from the floor to the roof, tearing down fragments of the rock, and beating them about with ceaseless jumble. The shivering victim of superstition shrunk with horror from this conflict of the waves; but there was no retreat, for the Druids had formed a close circle around the mouth of the entrance, and each of them had drawn from his girdle a long bloody knife, which they brandished with barbarous gestures in his face when he turned him round to see if there were no means of escape. The infernal sacrificers drew closer and closer around the entrance, striking their knives together with terrible clashing, and menacing the hapless man to make him plunge into the conflicting waves in the cavern. Still he seemed in a state of dreadful suspense whether to rush on the knives of the priests, and

defeat their hellish purpose of making him perish in the waters, or to meet the merciless wrath of the surge. He shrunk doubtfully from the one to the other, but wherever he turned death stared on him with naked horror, and his heart was so overpowered, that he staggered and reeled with dizzy agitation. He supported himself from falling by leaning on the damp wall of the passage, and he closed his eye for a moment, and tried to imagine that he was bewildered in some dreadful dream. He was roused from his momentary reverie by the dull crashing sound of a large stone against the rocks at the mouth of the passage, and which he found was thus blocked up; and the savage music sounded feebly through the crevices of the rocky wall, the last earthly sounds he thought he should ever hear, for the waves were now breaking over him, and it was hopeless to struggle with their violence. The savage priests abandoned the wretched Grougar to his fate, exulting that they had performed an acceptable sacrifice to

the great Onvana; and the Arch-Druid retired with the same genuflections and ceremonies with which he had advanced to the horrid cavern. The musicians played softer music as they had not now to drown the cries of the victim, and they began to proceed back as before to the grove. They were just beginning the solemn pace of procession, when a wild looking female appeared on the summit of a rock above them. She descended from the height with prodigious speed, and without regard to the sacredness of the procession, she hurried into the midst of the Druids with madness pictured in her looks, exclaiming,

" Stop, O stop, and dinna kill him. It was me, it was me it did a' the ill. O tak me an' let my gudeman awa'. It was me, an' no him, an' I'll lay down my vera life gin ye'll let him gang hame tae the puir bairns, an' no tak him awa' frae boon their heads. Wee Baldie, puir man, was sabbin till his bit heart was liken tae break. O dinna, dinna kill

him, an' I'll pit my ain life in your hands. But whar is he? Whar's Jock, puir fallow, it I hae brought tae a' this? Dear Sirs, let me see him, gif it binna contrair tae your weys, an' I'll lay down my vera hair amang your feet."

"Go away, woman," said the Druid nearest her, "your husband has already paid the reward of his treachery."

"O dear, ye hinna suirely killed him?" returned the disconsolate wife. "O tak me rather instead o' him; for the bits o' weanies could never bide tae want him, he was aye sae gude tae the things whun he cam' hame i' the e'enings;" and she was going on with other particulars of affectionate recollection, distrusting, or wishing to distrust, the intelligence of her husband's death, which the Druid had hinted at, when one of the most savage of the inferior priests stepped out of his place, and flourishing his long knife over her head, gave her to understand that he would make no ceremony of chopping her in-

to collops unless she took her departure in peace, adding, that the traitor whom she called her husband was wrestling a fall with the waves in the Uaimh nan Onbhaine, or cavern of Onvana. She darted away with inconceivable swiftness to the mouth of the side entrance of the cavern; but when she found it blocked up with a huge stone, which all her strength could not move from its place, she became quite frantic. Nay, she thought she heard him struggling with the fury of the surge, and uttering stifled groans, which the returning wave choaked in his throat,—but all that might be fancy; for the waters gave out a wild jargon of sounds from their chafing, and boiling, and leaping from rock to rock, recoiling at intervals, as if to gather strength, and again rushing through the bowels of the cavern with the noise and the crash of a bursting thunder-cloud. Alas, the feeble arm of a woman, though strong in madness, could yield no aid to the wretched Grougar, whom the waves were now beating mercilessly on

the angled rocks; unless the bright goddess Onvana had already carried him off to her green dwelling in the depths of the ocean, where

——————— her bowre
Is built of hollow billows heaped hye,
Like to thicke clouds, and vaulted as the skye.*

His widowed spouse tortured herself for a while with the notion that the roar of the surge was by turns mingled with the dying voice of her husband, and tore her hair with bitter anguish that she could not aid him. Anon her frenzy drove her to follow the savage procession to take vengeance, as she purposed, on his murderers; for the madness of feelings, such as hers, never suggests the thought of weakness, and, though embattled legions had stood before her, she would have fearlessly encountered their force.

She soon overhied the procession, which

* Spenser's Faery Queene, III. 4–43.

was now advanced to the open country in its way to the grove, and darting forward to the aged Brassail, she was about to seize him by the long white beard which flowed down to his girdle, had not an attending priest luckily caught the wrathful arm of the frantic widow, and preserved the venerable Arch-Druid from the unhallowed assault. Her tone was now changed from entreaty to the bitterest invective, of which it would be vain to venture on a faithful recital.

"Ye scawm't-like deevil's buckies!" were some of her wild ravings, "could ye no fin' anither gate tae the Ill Pairt nor harlin awa' a sponsefu' man frae his hame and haudin': The Ill Pairt! my fegs, it's owre gude for the best o' you, ye corbie-hearted, bloody-thrappl't rievers, it ye are. The very looks o' ye's awsome," and she shrunk with dread while she spoke, "aul' Cluitie himsel' 's glowrin' out at the vera e'en-holes o' you, ye vile Sathan's brats. An' ye wad cleed yoursel in white, an' talk o' purity, and innocence,

an' a clean heart, whun ye're as rotten's muck tae the vera banes and bluid o' ye ; an' ye wad wheetle, an' whushie, an' blaw i' the lug o' Sathan to tryst a bien neuk at the cheek o' his brunstane ingle, ye warlock-face't elfs, an' haud him up in snysts an' birsles till the maw o' him's as fu's a cout amang clover. Let go my arm this meenit, ye wyle wurf-like wuddiefu' o' sin, or I'll set my teeth in the withered chafts o' you till the bluid pirl out o' your luckin' e'en, ye illfa'r'd limb o' the de'il. I'll twussle your thrapple in a jiffy, an' ye think tae camshacle me wi your bluid-thristy fingers ;" and she made the affrighted priest reel behind his companions with a violent jerk, while the rest, seeing the rude treatment that was dealt out by the frantic widow, stood aloof from her fury.

The procession, in the meanwhile, was interrupted by this unhallowed assault ; and it seemed impossible to proceed without binding her, for her madness rendered it difficult

to secure her by human force; and to restrain her wild invectives, which rung in their ears, was equally vain. Two of the musicians, accordingly, came upon her at unawares, and bound her hand and foot with their girdles, and left her weltering on the ground, till they should send a carr for her from the grove.

It was in this pitiful and helpless state that she was found by the fair Ethne and Calye Mulloy, who had kept themselves concealed from the Druids of the procession, lest Ethne's arrival might unfit her father from going through the requisite ceremonies of the sacrifice. They had got behind a rock where they saw the advance of the procession, and Ethne, who never could bring her heart to acquiesce in such merciless proceedings, remained in devotion to Onvana to spare the unfortunate victim, while Calye Mulloy, whose heart was of "sterner stuff," feasted her eyes with the crowning and anointing the hapless man, and their driving him into the infernal

cave. Ethne was even in doubt whether it might not be the prince himself they had seized upon, and the very suggestion of the possibility of this made her blood run cold; but if it were so, no influence could now save him, and she continued her devotions in gloomy suspense till the ceremony was concluded; and then rose to follow the Vaid, without daring to hint her distressing suspicions.

They were now on their way to the grove, keeping due distance from the priests, and musing on their respective designs, when they found the luckless widow, tossing franticly about on the grass, in terrible agony of mind. Ethne instantly recognized, in the face of the distracted woman, the features of Jenny Grougar, and spoke kindly to her; but her words were lost, for the rational madness, if it may be called so, which had lately convulsed her mind, was now changed into the wildest delirium, caused, in some measure, by the inhuman treatment which she had

received from the savage and unfeeling priests.

The young Druidess, however, learned from some of her incoherent expressions, that it was her husband who had been exposed to the fury of the waves, which eased her mind of the gloomy doubts she had been led by love to entertain; but distressed her not a little to think of the sudden fate of her fellow voyager of the curragh, and she felt for the poor female who had thus been perhaps for ever deprived of reason. Yet what could be done. To loose her would only expose them to her insane fury, and they wanted strength to convey her away. Calye Mulloy perceived none of these difficulties, and pulled forth a large bodkin which fastened her cochal,* crying,

"You apostate besom! I'll soon make an end of your squeaking."

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* See Walker's Hist. Ess. Plates II. and V. and Speght's Gloss. in verb. *Bodkin*.

And was about to make her quietus with the weapon which has been celebrated in assassinations and assaults since the death of Julius Cæsar, and Simekin's fray with the Oxford clerks, in Chaucer's Reeve's Tale. Ethne rushed before the old hag, and darted at her a look more fierce and forbidding than she had ever in her life assumed, saying, in a voice of strong emotion,

"Stand back, in the name of mercy, and dare not to raise a finger against this poor woman. O that I had been able to save her unfortunate husband. He once risked his life, poor fellow, to snatch me from the jaws of death."—

"He's gane tae his rest
Wi' them he loos best,
An' I'll follow him a' the day lang,"

Sang poor Jenny to a wild plaintive air, and then, as if starting from a dream, she fixed her eyes upon Ethne, who was bending in pity over her, some incoherent recollections seemed to waver through her mind.——

"Angus!" she went on, "listen—wasna yon a skreigh? I think it'll ne'er gae out o' my min'. I ditted my ears with canna* down, but it ne'er gaes owre the ring. Is she safe, I beseech ye? O, sirs, its an awsome night; weary on thae wyle breakers, they're jowin' and jawin' as they wad worry up the very rokes. O but I'm glad ye hae gotten her out frae mang them; an' a bonny braw leddy she is.—Ae! Ae! my puir Jock! O wad ye no tak him out o' that awsome place?—his cries gang through my heart like a drawn swurd, an' it gars my vera flesh grew to hear him.—Whisht, Baldie, man, whisht an' no greet, your faether 'ill be hame at the gloamin' ye ken."——

The heart of the young Druidess was wrung with pity when she heard these wild ravings, while the old Vaid looked sulky and scowling, because her inhuman purpose was thus arrested. Ethne determined to wait beside poor Jenny till she could obtain assist-

* The cotton-grass, or *Eriopheron polystachion*, Linn.

ance, and prevailed on Calye Mulloy, reluctant as she was, to send one of her attendants to try to discover some cabin, whither they might get her carried and sheltered for the night; and, possibly, rest would restore her wandering intellects. This plan was so far successful, that the distracted woman was soon removed to a cabin at some distance, and put under the care of the inmates, to whom Ethne promised ample recompense for their trouble, she was answered by the mistress of the humble mansion,—

"Ogh! troth and troth, your ladyship, we wudn't think it sorrow a bit of trouble at all, we wudn't, only because we are mortally sartain this same cratur, saving your favour, is as good as a traitor; but, if your ladyship wud just only spake to *Them*, you know yourself, that we mightn't be after coming to harm, that's for the sake of doing her a bit of service, we wud be obliged to you entirely for ever, and pray God ye might never want a fren' to comfort you when ye'd be in naed."

The promise of protection was forthwith accorded, and the Calye Vaid urged Ethne to hasten their journey to the grove; for pity made her linger over the hapless woman, and use every method to sooth her distraction. She reluctantly followed the grim prophetess, musing in sadness on the distressing event which had detained them; and she even began to question in secret the authority of her father, for performing these inhuman sacrifices, that of late had been so profusely offered to their terrible divinities. This sacrilegious doubt which had thus been started in her mind arose from two causes. She had from infancy been tender-hearted, and had always shuddered at these bloody rites; their necessity she had never, till now, questioned; for every system of superstition makes doubt and want of implicit and unquestionable faith the greatest of all crimes;* and she did not

* The holy book of the ancient Persians called the Sadder or Shaster, begins in the first chapter by de-

then imagine it possible that any body could doubt the truth of the religion which she saw every body acquiesce in and believe. But now she had not only heard the truth of Druidism called in question;—the Catholics even went so far as to call it an invention of the Devil, to those they could trust; for in making converts, they always began with great address and insinuation.

Both of these circumstances tended to weaken her confidence in the use of these horrid sacrifices; and, consequently, gave a shock to her faith in the superstition which enjoined them. It gives a fatal blow to a system of faith when its devotees are brought to doubt and reason upon its foundation; for reason is

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nouncing damnation to all who have *ever* doubted that it is divinely inspired. In reading that chapter, I observed that Mahomet has been indebted to it for his bridge of Al-Sirat, which is said to span the Gulf of Perdition. The Sadder calls it Tchinavar. See Hyde's *Transl. in Relig. Vet. Persarum.*

always a prescribed intruder among priests and fanatics, and it is not therefore strange, that, even in the Christian church, ignorant bigotry should often have checked the spirit of inquiry, and branded Pelagius, Arminius, and Calvin, with the name of heretics, when they ventured to follow such explanations of scripture as their reason suggested. Their reason, indeed, might, and often did, lead them astray: but no one will thence assert, that faith is always right, when the Mahometan believes that his alcoran was actually written in heaven, and the Methodist, that the best actions of the best men are sinful and unrighteous before God, though acknowledged to be foreordained by his own wisdom.

Ethne began to think, that the faith of her fathers, and of her own early years, was not altogether so sound as she had been taught to believe; and this single sacrifice, attended with such horrid circumstances, had done more to unhinge her belief, than all the weighty arguments which Saint Patrick him-

self could have brought to bear against the cause. Arguments, indeed, always lose their effect, unless they are backed by the influence of circumstances and of feeling: no man of any warmth of emotion ever yielded to arguments, however powerful, when he was made to feel their naked force alone, without the assistance of pique, or pride, or interest. Like old Croaker in the comedy, he will say, "I tell you I'm fix'd, determin'd; so now produce your reasons. When I'm determin'd I always listen to reason; because it then can do no harm."

It is wonderful the change which a few hours or minutes frequently effect in the whole range of our thoughts, uprooting those which had long been fixed and rivetted, and establishing others which had been for years cautiously excluded from the mind. Had Ethne missed seeing this horrid procession, and even had she not lighted on the distracted widow, she would have advanced to meet her father with joy; but her spirits

were now depressingly damped, and she walked with heavy step beside the old Vaid, to whom she only spoke in broken monosyllables. Calye Mulloy, on the other hand, was exulting in high hopes of gaining her end by the combined power of her own spells, and those which the Arch-Druid would furnish, and teased the thoughtful Ethne with her loquacity; which seemed, like the gambols of a house-dog when just freed from his chain, to be altogether exhaustless.

All the musings of the fair Druidess on the impropriety of human sacrifices were put to flight when she met the embrace of her venerable father, and saw his tenderness for her evinced by the tears which fell down the furrows of his aged cheek; for he had deemed her lost for ever, and had given himself up to inconsolable grief.

CHAPTER XI.

Homeless near a thousand homes he stood,
And near a thousand tables, pin'd and wanted food.
WORDSWORTH'S *Ballads.*

WHEN Logaire's army reached the beautiful country on the confines of Tara, it was found that Kriomthan, the petty king of Leinster, had not dared to attack the palace; for the noise of his approach had roused every person who could draw a bow or throw a javelin,* to run to its defence; and all the Raths on the hill of Tara† were soon strongly garrisoned. Kriomthan contented himself

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* See Collectan. de Reb. Hib. IV. Plate XI. and Harris's Hibernia, p. 52, 53.

† These Raths are still to be seen at Tara.

with driving away as many of the cattle as he could conveniently seize, and marched back in triumph to his own palace.

This was an insult not to be borne with; for it was not a simple refusal to pay the *Boroimhe* tribute, but a gross invasion of the rights of the kingdom, which required the most terrible chastisement that the monarch could inflict. The winter, however, was now set in with much severity, and though the hardy warriors of those days were not to be balked in an intended expedition by the inclemency of the seasons, yet Logaire thought it would be more dignified to take his own time in punishing this audacious insurgent, and resolved to spend the winter at the palace.

The sight of this celebrated palace produced a wonderful effect on the perceptive organs of Bryan. He stared and blessed himself, and looked alternately at the building and the heavens, as if he thought it impossible to perform such a work without celestial aid. It

was, indeed, the noblest work of wood which, perhaps, was ever performed by man, Noah's Ark being always excepted,—and, I was about to say, the celebrated wooden horse by which the Greeks took Troy,—but that was nothing to the Irish royal palace at Tara. Nor will this be questioned when we are told, I think, by O'Halloran or Vallency, that "the Irish excelled all other nations in lignarian architecture." *

It was of an irregular structure, with lofty turrets on the numerous angles, like so many spires of a populous city; not like the modern city of Dublin, indeed, where there are marvellously few of these lightning attractors,

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* A palace of *dark polished stone* is mentioned in an ancient Irish poem published in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy for 1787; but its high antiquity may perhaps be questioned. The verses are:

Dh' fhosgladh dhuinn an Grianan corr
Air a thuithadh do chloth dhuinn
Lion meanmna siun uile.

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of which the good people seem to be wisely afraid. In these turrets were stationed the royal guards, who kept continual watch against surprise; the chiefs, as we have seen, being turbulent and ambitious; and to have surprised it, would have been no easy matter, since it commanded a view of the surrounding country for many miles; indeed, it was this very circumstance that pointed it out as an eligible situation. It had four principal fronts, besides wings and additional buildings. In these conspicuous places were the four grand halls, of which the south hall was the most splendid and extensive, and here the king himself usually feasted with his numerous train of attendants. My documents make no mention of the circumstances which Vallency has so minutely given, of the quantity of wine and mead which was daily quaffed by a thousand princes, orators, and engravers, nor of the number of sheep, and bullocks, and hogs, of which they nightly offered a *suovetaurilia*, *

* Should the reader wish to know what this was, I advise him to go to Rome and examine Trajan's Pillar.

not to the gods, but to their own craving appetites. Of all these I must be silent and turn to the men and the women who lived there, and enjoyed, when they were unencumbered with cares, the beautiful prospect from the hill of Tara, and admired the beauty of the wooden palace, and the strength of the turf fortifications.

It was towards evening when the army of the king halted at the foot of this celebrated hill. Every tower and turret was crowded with spectators, and the queen, with her maids of honour, graced the warriors with her presence, and walked out on the green slope before the palace to view the spectacle. Night, however, closed on them before all their salutations could be given and received, and the halls were splendidly illuminated for a grand entertainment.

The prince looked silently on, as if he had not been interested in the magnificent preparations; and seemed not to notice the glad faces of his favourite domestics, who welcomed

him back with every token of officious attention. He had ridden solitary and thoughtful during the whole march, from the moment he lost sight of Ethne and Dunluce. His day-dreams, indeed, sometimes rose in all the rainbow brightness of hope, and he would then smile in silence, and clasp his hands with rapidity, and sit more erect upon his steed. But then the grim visage of O'Neil would thrust itself upon his fancy, and old Brassail, with his white rod and silvered beard, would frown gloomily and make him start at his own picture. It was easy to foresee that *he*, at least, could not rest peacefully in the palace during the winter; for he could not relish the feasts and the revelry which made a chief part of the pleasures others enjoyed there. He met his sister, of whom he had been so fond, with a vacant look, which chilled her to the soul, and she could obtain from him nothing but the most listless indifference to all her kindness; for the young princess had all her girlish feelings warm and fresh, and

lavished them all on her dear brother. When she found she could not rouse him from his apathy, she went away disconsolate to her own apartment, and burst into tears.

In the bustle of the arrival of so many guests, and the coming on of the night, it was not strange that Bryan, though he had performed so many important services, should have escaped attention. He had stalked up the hill among the rest, and stood about the grand porch, but when he looked into the hall and encountered the splendour of the decorations, and the brilliance of the flambeaux and lamps, he imagined he was arrived at the gate of paradise, and durst not venture to present himself without a particular invitation, lest he should suffer for his temerity. He waited, however, for this mark of distinction in vain, not that he was forgot, though not so high in rank as the other guests. In those days, as now, it was superior talents and important services that gave distinction, and the humble birth of a dependent did not ex-

clude him from sitting down even at the king's table, when he had done or could do any thing which merited this mark of honour. But the prince had wandered out into the palace gardens to indulge his solitary fancy, and the king was in the bustle of salutations, and, in short, poor Bryan was neglected.

He thought he would try to gain an entrance at some more humble looking door than the one which opened into the great hall, if there were such a thing as humility about the palace; and he, accordingly, began to make a peregrination round its several wings and angles, his mind all the while oppressed with, I had almost said, tangible astonishment. Nay, he thought that the buildings were without bounds or limits; for he could not make a clear distinction between the palace itself and the numerous raths which lay round it on the hill, whose watch-fires and guard torches blazed on his sight wherever he

turned, till his wits were bewildered with the grandeur of the spectacle.

After going for some distance along the walls, he could not find any thing like an entrance to the interior; at last he arrived at a porch, but it did not seem to fall much short of the splendour of the one he had just quitted. There was, indeed, no bustle at the threshold; but the magnificence within was, if possible, beyond all he had yet seen, for there stood the banqueting tables, and the rich canopy under which the king was to sit, and the seats for the nobles in their order; and the numerous pages of the palace and the other domestics hurrying, in fine apparel, through the hall on their several duties, some placing on the tables the massy plate, embossed with numerous devices; some arranging jars of wine and mead, and waxen drinking cups;* and others setting

* Glass vessels were known at this period, but seem to have been chiefly used as funeral urns. Drinking

seats for the guests, and lighting, with flambeaux, the chandeliers that hung from the roof.

Anon, the king was announced, and he advanced with a majestic step, with the queen on his right hand, and Saint Patrick on his left. Bryan's face lighted up when he saw the great apostle, for whom he had risked his life, held in so high and deserved honour. The good man himself, however, seemed little elated thereby, and looked on all the splendour and magnificence around him as the vain pageant of fleeting grandeur, which could not be carried beyond the grave. He was not affected by the spectacle which so overpowered the sight of Bryan; for he had long been a witness to all the profuse luxury of imperial Rome, and even the more refined prodigality of the capital of the Eastern Empire; so that the rude spectacle of a barbarian court, grand as Logaire's was, looked

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cups were usually of horn, or wax, or wood. Montfaucon, Ant. Tome III. and Cæsar, B. G.

like the mock imitations of children at play. There was a manliness, however, in the looks of the guests, and also of the domestics, which made amends for inferior refinement, and pleased the warm-hearted apostle to contemplate in his adopted countrymen; and was very unlike the effeminate appearance of the depraved Romans. Patrick looked on the manly majesty of Logaire, and thought, with a sigh, of the Emperor Honorius feeding his chickens at Ravenna, and quietly giving up his beautiful dominions to be ravaged by the terrible Attila and his savage horde. *

To Bryan, however, this splendid hall was far beyond the widest range of his dreams, and filled his mind with wonder and awe. He now saw the king advance to his seat, and his cup-bearer present him with a silver cup with wine; it seems it was the custom thus to begin meals in those days. After each guest had pledged the monarch, the domes-

* See Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Vol. VII.

tics advanced from numerous boufets that stood along the hall, carrying choice viands of every sort to the table ready carved. Our looker-on saw no more, for the cold which found its way through the porch where he stood, began to annoy some of the more effeminate guests, and the broad wicker gate * was inhumanely shut in his face. He took care, indeed, not to let himself be seen, so that he had no legitimate reason of complaint that he was not called to the feast.

He was thus compelled to begin his wandering again, and perambulated in distressful uncertainty the various areas around the palace. He now wished he had mustered courage to make himself known in the banqueting hall, as his stomach began to remind him by divers twinges that there was at present a vacuum in its mensuration for a piece of good beef. The warning was now too late; yet he thought, if he could again find the porch,

* Sic in Documentis penes Auct.

that he could speak through the door, which would serve as a good veil for his false shame. He had not forgot the large jars of liquor which had been arranged so temptingly on the tables, and this also aided his resolution to make the trial. He accordingly began to measure back his steps to the porch; but he had not gone far when his eye caught a glimpse of light that was streaming from a lattice. He thought he might just take a peep at what was going on in this quarter, under a presentiment that he might perhaps be in luck there as much as in the other place.

He got near to the lattice, and was surprised to see the young princess sitting by a taper weeping. This was an occurrence as wonderful as any he had yet seen, for Bryan, in the simplicity of his heart, had imagined that sorrow could never get within the walls of a palace. Besides Aoine there was one of her maids, who was trying to comfort her mistress by the most endearing attentions. The

youthful looks of these ladies, though Bryan only saw them at a distance, drove from his mind all thoughts of beef and banqueting. He thought only of little Norah, whom he had left so long alone, and his fatherly tenderness got the better of his manhood, and his eyes filled with tears. He regretted now that he had not returned to Glendalagh when he was so near it in coming from the north; but he had been requested by the king and the prince to accompany them to Tara, and had not had courage to refuse.

The sight of the ladies rivetted his attention, and he drew nearer the lattice, at the expence of good manners, to learn, if he could, the cause of the princess's sorrow, with the benevolent design of doing his best to remove it, should that lie in his power. The princess seemed inconsolable, and sobbed aloud, as if her young heart would have burst through her bosom. The maid in waiting hung over her with soothing attention; she had so much the air and shape of his own

Norah, at least his fancy said so, that if it had not been beyond his ideas of possibility, he would have concluded it was Norah herself. The face of the maiden was turned away from him, so that his imagination had free scope for its airy pictures. He was certain, however, that the shape and stature agreed, and the hair, he thought, was also similar, though it was more elegantly filleted than he had ever seen Norah's. He listened with suppressed breath to catch the tone of her voice, but she only spoke in a soothing whisper to the sorrowful princess. He heard Aoine say,

"Ah, if he only knew how I loved him, and to look so cold and chilling upon me when my heart warm'd to see him again!"

The maid whispered something in reply which he could not hear; the princess rejoined,

"Alas! that I should grieve for one who cares not for me—well, I shall never think of him more, nor grieve for him more, when he does not care for me;" and she began to dry

up her tears, gave a deep sigh, and tried to look cheerful, adding, "I think I should like to have some music to put me in spirits, heighho!"

Her attendant instantly disappeared through the door of the apartment, and Bryan never wished more in his life to have his fingers on a harp to please the sweet-looking princess with his skill. His eye, however, pursued the retreat of the little nymph with anxiety to get a glance of her face; but fortune did not humour his wish, and he waited, though not patiently, till she would return. She came back in haste—but his countenance fell, for it was not Norah, as he had fondly dreamed.

"Madam," said the maid, "his majesty requests to see you and your brother, who, he was told, was with you."

"Tell my father that the prince was not here, and that I am indisposed," was the reply of the princess.

Bryan had leisure to look at the messenger

more narrowly, and doubted much whether she was the one who had gone out. His doubts were soon set at rest when the door again opened, and the first nymph appeared. He looked a moment as if to clear his eyes, he even struck his forehead violently with his hand, by way of assuring himself of his own identity, and finished by exclaiming,

"By dad, it is her own self, if I shud never live till to-morrow," and he pushed the lattice violently before him, darted into the apartment, and caught the little girl in his arms. It was indeed his own Norah, and the sight of her made him forget where he was and what he was doing, or he would never have been guilty of such an outrage as breaking into the apartment of a princess. Aoine, indeed, was so much astonished that she either could not, or forgot to scream; and Bryan was so overjoyed, that he saw nothing but the little girl that was now his all in the world.

When the first burst of fatherly emotion

was over, Bryan began to have some notion of the impropriety he had been guilty of, and dared not look up, but hid his face in Norah's bosom, wishing himself snug in his own cabin rather than meet the look of the fair princess, whom he had offended by his unparalleled rudeness. He was roused by a voice behind him, which he immediately knew was *not* that of the princess.

"Man aleive!" said the speaker with a true Irish accent, "who is it ye're houl'ing there, Norah, dear, like a lump of a chil' ye'd be nursing?"

"It's nobody but myself," said Bryan, starting up and grasping the hand of the questioner: It was old Camderoch.

The princess had too much feeling to interupt the happiness of this glad group of friends, and she forgot for an instant her own sorrow in sympathy with their joy. This, indeed, was a more effectual antidote to her affliction than could have been administered by the harp of Camderoch, which the good

old man had brought at her request to amuse her.

It may be recollected, that when Bryan set out from the hunting encampment at Dalriogh, on his perilous expedition, that he recommended to the king,—should he be so unfortunate as not to return, to do something for a little bit of a girl he had at Glendalagh. This was overheard by the princess Aoine, who, in gratitude for Bryan's activity in the night-fray with the O'Neils, and his undertaking the dangerous task of liberating the apostle, thought she ought to do something in return for his daughter. She, accordingly, with her father's consent, had sent off to Glendalagh for little Norah, who was much about her own age. Camderoch was found, when the messengers arrived at the cabin, busy tuning his harp; but when he understood the purport of their visit, he swung forward his foot with such violence that he kicked the harp fairly beyond the hearth, a thing which he had never done once in his

life before; for he was too fond of his harp to treat it so roughly, except on so extraordinary an occasion. He concluded the feat by swearing by all the trees in the Ban Forest, that he would go with Norah himself, old as he was, and see that she caught no harm by the way. He had, since his arrival at the palace, become a great favourite with the princess, who was fond of his tunes and of his antique simplicity, and she had, accordingly, retained him and appointed him to be her own harper.

Norah was put on the list of her maids in waiting, and though her secluded education made her at first appear awkward beside the refined ladies who attended the princess, yet she was so desirous to please her royal mistress that she was usually successful in her little attentions. Aoine, in her turn, was anxious to have her instructed in the branches of education suited to her situation, and condescended to make particular inquiry concerning her progress, and was so well satisfied with her proficiency, that it was not

long before she took a liking to her, gave her an apartment near her own, and, in short, made her so much a favourite, that the poor girl's head was in danger of being turned, and she was on the high way of being completely spoiled. But, in this hey-day of prosperity, she did not forget her father, and the princess often found her in tears, which she endeavoured as well as she could to conceal.

The arrival of the army had put her in a terrible flutter; for she thought she would *now* see her father again, and she had stolen out in the bustle to look for him among the soldiers, but the coming on of the night had compelled her, with a sad heart, to return to her apartment disappointed; and she was soon called thence to comfort her mistre ss when she most needed comfort herself.

CHAPTER XII.

"At every solemn pause the crowd recoil,
Gazing each other speechless, and congeal'd
With shiv'ring sighs."

AKENSIDE.

MALTHUINE, while these things were going on at the palace, had walked out alone into the gardens, to send his thoughts on the wings of love to the distant north, where he had left the fair Ethne, among the wild sisterhood of Dunluce. It gave him little concern, that the troops of Leinster had so lately scoured the country, and carried off so many cattle. Nor did he ever think of the vengeance which ought to be poured down upon such audacious rebels. He could only think of Ethne, whom, perhaps, he might never see again, or who might be united to the stern O'Neil, and all his hopes of felicity

for ever blasted. Of that rebel he did think as of the frowning barrier which opposed his happiness, and he heartily deprecated the rashness of his father, in retreating when he might have annihilated his power, and, perhaps, the rebel himself might have fallen in the conflict, or have been taken prisoner, all which were possible to a lonely muser in the gardens at Tara. And what cared the prince, though these gardens had been laid desolate, and even the palace itself left in ruins by the marauding Leinstrians, had he secured the lovely Ethne. What was even the monarchy of Ireland itself, and the contending strife which attended it, compared with her!

Her promise had set his mind at rest in one interesting point; she had plighted him her love, should it ever be in her power to return his affection. But the grand obstacle of her betrothment recurred to damp his hopes; and these two circumstances so distracted his mind, between hope and fear, that he could not restrain himself from the wildest

extravagancies of action. He stamped, beat his head, and tossed his arms with frantic gesticulation. Her plighted love was to him a prize of inestimable value, and so he had esteemed it in the raptured moments he had passed with her by the solitary shore, or he could never have forced himself to leave her. Had he not been assured of her love, he would have lingered near her at the hazard of his life, till he had wrung from her a confession of her feelings. Now, that he had obtained such a confession, his thoughts were agitated as restlessly as before; for he was still in racking uncertainty and doubt. In such a state, it is impossible for the strongest mind to continue long. The slightest film of hope is eagerly caught at, and should that give way, another, though equally feeble, is keenly pursued.

The prince, we have seen, had parted from Ethne, exulting over the declaration he had extorted from her; and that exultation had borne up his mind during the march. But

he now began to look upon it as a thing of course, and to despair of its fulfilment, unless he should take some active measures to ensure success. Various plans suggested themselves. He thought of requesting his father to demand her of Brassail; but rejected the notion before he thought of the details. He concluded his castle building with the mad project of returning himself to the north, and endeavouring to accomplish he knew not well what, but he determined to go to the north; not without blaming his want of eloquence, that had not been able to retain her, when she was formerly his sister's guest; and still more his folly in being persuaded to leave her at Dunluce. All which errors and follies he purposed to remedy, by returning with all speed to the north; and, satisfying his thoughts with this, he summoned up his spirits, and returned to the banqueting hall, in a very different mood from what he had stolen away to the gardens.

In the hall, wine had banished care from

every heart; even the king seemed to have forgot his unsuccessful expedition, and the insult of the Leinstrians in the whirl of mirth which circulated around him; and without losing his dignity, which he knew well how to maintain, he joined in the good humour of the feast, as heartily as his happy guests. The prince entered unobserved, and when he saw the glee and frolic which was going forward, he stept aside to view the scene, without interrupting the actors, by abruptly presenting himself.

At the end of the grand table, opposite to the king, the prince observed an old fellow, with a gruff jolly countenance, to whom the eyes of all in that quarter were turned, as if they had tacitly elected him mirth's signal maker. He was in the midst of a mock oration, which he said had been pronounced by Kriomthan, to prove to his soldiers, that driving away a herd of cattle was no robbery; and he seasoned his wit with such well timed shrugs, and grimaces, and divers pauses and

nods, that he succeeded in making a laughable caricature of the poor king of Leinster. He passed on to Erc O'Neil, and pictured his retreat from Dalriogh in the same style of ridicule, imitating his getting behind bushes,—his speechless terror,—and his childish joy, when he found himself in safety, till he caused his laughing auditors to sneer with contempt at these formidable foes. When he had thus excited peals of laughter, he happened to observe the prince, and mistaking him for a vision of O'Neil, he all at once looked grave, and turned round his head with a terrified look, exclaiming:

"Mercy! there he is bodily. May God in heaven guard me!"

The laugh was suddenly changed into exclamations of terror, and those who were not overcome by fear started up, and fled behind the king, as if royalty had been a bar to all danger. The man of mirth himself stood in a most rueful plight, his eye-balls staring wildly, his teeth chattering like a watchman's

rattle, and every limb of his body shivering and starting, as if he had been undergoing the pinches of Queen Mab, and her elfin attendants. The hair of his flesh stood on end, and he breathed so thick and gaspingly, that some of the domestics in the anti-room thought he had in frolic begun to imitate the dying of a bull, protesting they never heard any thing so naturally counterfeited. The king, who had been eagerly listening to a frolic executed by King Cormac Long-beard, and did not hear the beginning of the fray, was quite enraged at the uproar, but could not help smiling at the dismay which met him in every face. But when they told him gravely, that while old Dranshogle was burlesquing the rebel O'Neil, he had appeared to them just as they saw him looking over the ramparts of Rath-na-Carraig, Logaire got quite furious, swore there was a conspiracy in his own palace, and ordered the guards to seize and imprison the aforesaid Dranshogle

and the rest, till he should make a farther investigation into their conduct.

The prince, who had been the innocent cause of all this uproar, was silently withdrawing from scenes which he could not mingle in, when he heard the orders pass for the attendance of the guards in the hall. He turned back to learn the cause of alarm; but his presence was ill calculated to still the tumult; for he was sufficiently like O'Neil to pass for that rebel, in the eyes of those who were giddy with wine, and their fancy already stirred up, by the asseveration of Dranshogle, that he had actually seen the chief of Rath-na-Carraig in that very room an instant before. When the prince returned, therefore, he was saluted, to his no small amazement, with cries of "merciful God! What shall I do!"—"Avaunt! in the name of Christ." "Ogh! I am a dead man!"—with others of the same sort, all uttered in one confused tumult of gasping voices. The conscienc of Dranshogle, which was not

usually a troublesome inmate, at this moment became provokingly recollective of sundry injuries he had been guilty of, in bringing the person of O'Neil into contempt with his bottle companions, and the same conscience began to smite his heart with unmanly terror, for the punishment which he had no doubt would be forthwith inflicted on his person, for these several delinquencies. With the stern countenance which he had pictured in the apparation of O'Neil before him, and the dread of the anticipated castigation of his bodily frame, Dranshogle did not feel any pressing inclination to abide the consequences, and shrunk down under the table, as quietly as a fox into a hen coop, or a monk into a nunnery, casting upwards many a fearful look and ghastly lankness of face, lest his retreat should be discovered.

The prince, seeing all this uproar and tumult, and perceiving himself to be shunned like a ghost, he began to think that his appearance was something terrible, and was not

without apprehensions of the same Erc O'Neil having dealt with the devil, for the purpose of transforming him by magic, as he had often done to others. Even the king looked strange at him, and he was compelled to believe, that if he was not bewitched himself, of a surety all the rest were.

The guards, who had been ordered in to apprehend Dranshogle and others for the supposed conspiracy, asked the king whom his majesty wished them to arrest. This simple question brought Logaire to reflect a moment on the event, and caused Malthuine to ask the cause of the confusion. The sound of his voice instantly dispelled the illusion, and order was soon restored, for terror had effectually banished the effects of the wine from their brains.

Old Dranshogle himself became now the butt of the jest; for he could not be persuaded to unkennel from his lurking place, being still in the belief that he was to suffer in the flesh for his unseemly jokes. A waggish

youth, who was never known to be guilty of neglect, when he met with so fit a subject to exert his talents on as Dranshogle, was anxious to prove, that he was a faithful follower of the God Lok, whose tricks upon the superior divinities of the Northern Heaven he had carefully studied and admired.* This Lokite, then, as we take the liberty to baptize him, meditated on the propriety of giving Dranshogle a foretaste of the music he might expect to enjoy after death, by blindfolding him, and lodging him safely on the roof of the royal dog-kennel, binding him withal by strong

* The Edda, or sacred book of Iceland, is full of the pranks of this God Lok, who, by the way, is none other than Luck or Fortune. On one occasion, he contrived to make Thor (the god from whom Thursday takes its name) engage to drink a cup of liquor; but Lok had cunningly effected a communication between the cup and the sea, and Thor gulped away at the salt water for half a day, to the no small amusement of Lok, and the consternation of whales, krakens, and other fish.

ropes, to prevent his making an escapade, that might bring his neck or his nose into untimely danger. The difficulty was, how this was to be accomplished, for the king would by no means give countenance to such pranks, though he had been known to laugh heartily, when they were executed without his privity. The Lokite, in this dilemma, bethought himself of Angus, whom he had frequently found a useful auxiliary on similar occasions; and immediately went in search of the Caledonian.

It was accordingly resolved, that Angus should set fire to a quantity of hay in one of the remotest courts of the palace, and give two or three loud blasts upon the alarm trumpet, which would soon empty the banquet hall, and leave them at leisure to practise on the person of Dranshogle, there being no likelihood of his quitting the security of his concealment. A short time after, Angus managed so well, that the alarm of fire was sounded through every quarter of the pa-

lace, and the hall was quickly as empty as they could wish; but they had not calculated justly with respect to the locomotion of Dranshogle, whom it concerned them to secure; for he speedily came into the belief, that the apparition of O'Neil had set the palace on fire, for the sole purpose of consuming him in its ashes, and he bolted from beneath the table as if he had been pitched out by the shock of an earthquake; and in his expedition to get into the open air, he did not wait to go round the tun-belly of a fat butler whom he encountered in the passage, but fairly threw him down on his back, and ran, or rather trod, over him, discomposing with his bullock-like feet several stones of solid paunch, which had not for years before felt the touch of any thing harder than a lamb's wool belt, to whose support the butler entrusted the more ponderous portion of his portly exterior. Nor did the affrighted Dranshogle look behind him to see whether a deep groan which the butler sent forth in pursuit of help,

was not the last he might ever be able to dispatch on the same errand.

This race of the terrified humourist, it is true, had not been foreseen; but the Lokite and his accomplice were not such novices, as to be thrown out of their path by accident; for Dranshogle had no sooner cleared the palace than they came behind him as softly as his furious haste would permit them, and dropt over him an immense cloak; the Lokite, at the same instant, growling in a hollow voice,

"I am the spirit of O'Grushelan, the king's butler, that you murdered at the entrance to the banqueting hall!—You must go with me."

"O Lord! O Lord!" groaned the terrified Dranshogle, while Angus secured the folds of the cloak around his head and arms, tumbled him on a barrow they had previously got for his transportation, and whirled him off to the attics of the dog-kennel. The unusual bustle over the heads of the canine race,

operated so favourably in concert with the wags, that the squeaking of a couple of pigs, which they had tied in a corner of Dranshogle's cloak, could scarcely be heard; for every dog in the kennel seemed to be straining his throat with anxiety to be heard in preference to his neighbour. Had Dranshogle, indeed, been as learned in the northern divinity as the Lokite, he would, in his present state of mind, have forthwith concluded, that the end of all things was at hand, and that the howling, which sounded so unearthly, proceeded from the throat of the wolf Fenris, in token of brutal gladness, before he began to make his breakfast of gods and devils, and all other things, created and uncreated, which that terrible monster, it is thought, will have the conscience to do, to make amends for a long fast. *

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* That this statement is not overcoloured, any one may convince himself, by looking into Goranson's Latin translation of the Edda, or Mallet's Northern Antiq. by Dr Percy.

As it was, poor Dranshogle thought he had been conveyed through the air to the world of spirits, to dree penance for the unlucky displacement of the soul of the fat butler, a deed he had never in his life meditated on committing. The successful wags enjoyed the frolic with great zest; but to increase their pleasure, they judged it proper to obtain others to partake of their mirth. The Lokite, accordingly, returned to the hall, where the guests were swallowing down double bumpers to expel the cold they had caught in their throats, by getting out into the night-air on the false alarm of fire. He put on a grave face, and told them, he "had seen Leprighaun, or some other wicked goblin, carry off Dranshogle through the air, and lodge him on the top of the dog-kennel; and that the poor man, he doubted not, would lose his reason, unless he were brought back among Christian sinners." The king, on this information, dispatched servants with torches, to bring back the humourist to his

station at the table, where his wit was as indispensable as the wine they drank. It was remarked by Angus, who was laughing heartily in his sleeve,

"That he was gayan muckle mista'en gin they wad could houk ony kennin o' wit out o' his gab for ae night, an they didna tak it i'their heeds to laugh at his jowls o' cheeks that he could wud his lug were gawn like the wame o' a deein' skate, and his e'en rowin' i'his heed like the navel o' a turn-weel."

Dranshogle, however, was brought back, and his looks certainly did not belie the ludicrous description of Angus. He still imagined that this was only another remove in the spiritual regions, so strongly had every event tended to work up his imagination, and when they uncovered his face, he could not be prevailed on to open his eyes, lest they should encounter the sight of horrid caldrons and furnaces, with other instruments of infernal torture, but, most of all, he dreaded to meet the enraged ghost of O'Grushelan,

which he had so unwittingly, as he thought, disembodied. Doubt, however, is often as painful, or at least as difficult, to bear with as bodily suffering. So thought Dranshogle; and to escape from teasing suspense, he raised, with much caution, the edge of his left eye-lid, which eye-lid, by the way, had often served him in good stead when his stories were deficient in genuine wit. This peep, alas, gave him no hope of mercy, for he had by ill luck uncovered just as much of the aforesaid left eye as admitted the figure of the murdered butler, who had at that instant been helped upon his legs, and waddled into the room with the pace of a Muscovy duck.

"O Lord!—O Lord!" cried the bewitched Dranshogle, "what will become of me? Dear master butler you must excuse me, for I'll be bound to take my bodily oath," and he laid a strong emphasis on the word *bodily*, "I'll be bound to take my bodily oath, that I never intended to do you harm, so help me God."

"You driv me over on my—hem—on my back howsomdever, and squeezed the breath out of my body—hem—and left me—you did—for dead in the passage."

"Dear master butler," rejoined Dranshogle, who had now enclosed the whole of his left eye, the right being kept in reserve for other wonders; "dear master butler, really I could not for my soul help it."

"Help it! help overturning a man and walking over his belly. Lord, I wonder what the world will turn to."

The whole guests, upon this odd dialogue between too such originals, burst into a loud laugh, which had the effect of disenchanting poor Dranshogle as effectually as if he had been prayed over by all the conclave of Rome. Angus ventured to address him with,

"Eh man, but ye maun be an unco docus to mistak the yowlin' o' a wheen dougs for the squeelin' o' ghaists an' deevils! I wonner what ye made o' the twa grumphies it ye had row't up amang your falalls; gin ye thought

it they war young de'ils or what, snoukin' for a sappy emmeldyug about the harigals o' ye."

Angus was reprimanded for his freedom of speech, however, and after mutual explanations, and several hearty peals of laughter, the assembly broke up, and, like the gods in Homer, all retired to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

—— Terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides?
HORAT.

—— We stand the sport of mocking fiends,
Who grin to see our noble nature vanquish'd.
C. JOHNSON'S *Wife's Relief.*

IT may well be supposed that the good Apostle was not a witness of the ludicrous scene with Dranshogle in the banqueting hall. He knew it would be in vain for him to think of preventing such unprofitable and sinful waste of precious time; but it would have been unpardonable in himself to join the revelry, and he had at an early hour retired to his own apartment, where were several of the inferior missionaries returned from different parts of the island to give him an account of their labours. And he learned

from them with rapture, that notwithstanding the unsettled state of the kingdom, the gospel was, through the power of grace, making wide progress, and several of the ladies of the chiefs had already been baptized, having renounced with tears the errors of Druidism. The chiefs themselves were thus in a fair way of being converted by domestic lectures, and their clans would, of course, soon follow their example.

This intelligence was so gratifying to the heart of the holy man, and so unexpected at this moment, that it produced a sudden brightening up in his countenance, which overawed the good missionaries as much as if they had stood in the presence of an angel. In this, indeed, there was nothing supernatural, as in the case of Moses when he descended from the mount; but his thoughts always found a rapid way to his countenance, and they had been so long depressed with gloomy forebodings, that the glad tidings fell on his face like a burst of sunshine on a dark and

troubled lake. And his eyes sparkled, and his cheek glistened, as if he had already joined the seraphs in paradise, to join his voice with theirs in the song of triumph over the downfall of paganism, and the universal spread of the gospel.

"And who of you," he said with eagerness, "will now undertake the dangerous task of converting the fair Ethne, the daughter of the Arch-Druid? This is indispensable to our success, and our Great Master, who is in heaven, condescends himself to the use of means. It is indispensable, but it will be a work full of peril and difficulty; yet through the power of faith, you may do all things, even to the removal of mountains, as saith the scriptures. And we need not despair of converting even the stern rebel O'Neil, if we be skilful and persevering. One of you must depart instantly for Rath-na-Carraig, and express a wish to get home to Albion. I fortunately learned from a deserter of O'Neil's, that he was anxious to pro-

eure a guide to conduct his young son, Fergus, on some secret embassy to our island. Now, this promising youth has much influence with his father, and, besides, he is heir-elect. He must be secured to us—and speedily, before that infernal superstition take root in his young mind. Accomplish this, and the whole clan of O'Neil, nay the whole north, will fly to the standard of the cross. "M'Gurdie," he continued, addressing himself to a little square built, short-necked, sly looking man, "I think you will be the fittest person to entrust with this business, and should the youth be gone, you must follow him with all speed, and insinuate yourself into his company. I need say no more, I can trust to your management."

M'Gurdie replied by a movement of his body, which it is thought he meant for a bow of thanks for the honour done him, but it resembled more the stiff and painful ducking of a lame poney, when it makes a hop to a fresh bit of pasture after having snubbed up every

blade of grass and herbage round the spot it had been standing on for an hour preceding. The awkwardness of the bow, however, was compensated for in the reverence which the performer thereof had for the Apostle; and it was no fault of his that his bones were too firmly knit, and his body of too compact solidity, to admit of the flippant motions, which he deemed, with much correctness of judgment and observation, ought to be confined to spindle bodied striplings of fourteen.

The task of converting the fair Druidess, the Apostle wisely assigned to a young man of a comely prepossessing appearance, who had been found the most successful advocate with the female sex who had yet been employed in the good work. But good works seldom escape the malicious comments of the wicked, and it was loudly whispered that Farquhar, the handsome missionary, had tampered with his salvation to obtain from evil spirits a fascinating eye,—an organ which it could not be denied he possessed, though there was no

proof that he had come by it through the use of any supernatural means. *

Several other arrangements were made which, for the sake of brevity, must be passed over, that more room may be left for giving the most momentous events at large. We must not omit, however, that the Apostle was so much elated with the progress of his great work, that he could not close his eyes during the whole night; for his thoughts rolled from young Fergus to the Druidess, and from these to their successful exertions, till the dawn broke over the raths of Tara, where all was now hushed and still, except the cheerful whistle of the sentinels pacing round their turf-built ramparts.

"Since my brethren have been so active and successful," he thought with himself, "I must not be longer idle."

And he went immediately to the audience

* See the Caliph Vathek, a fine eastern story, of European manufacture.

chamber to wait for the king, to whom he meant to propose a plan, of which he had long thought as the only means for securing the permanency of the holy religion among his adopted countrymen. This plan consisted in building churches in all parts of the kingdom, to the service of which stationary priests would be appointed, whose daily acquaintance with the people among whom they resided would have a much more powerful and abiding influence, than the transitory visits of the most zealous missionaries, the impression of whose discourses were in danger of giving way to the threats or the banter of the next druid they might encounter. Now, all this would be completely obviated, by having good churches in convenient and populous districts throughout the country.

The proposal was no sooner made to Logaire, than he agreed to it with alacrity; for he was now so piqued at the druids and their adherents, that he was willing to adopt any measure that would contribute to their an-

noyance. By the way, he had been informed over night, that the king of Leinster, who had been baptized in compliance with his solicitations, was believed to have apostatized, and would in all probability join forces with O'Neil in the spring. This was only a rumour; but Logaire believed its truth as firmly as if he had seen the united armies advancing under the walls of his palace. The church building scheme accordingly soon engrossed all his attention; and he expected, that as it was a work which would be acceptable to heaven, he might, in consequence of carrying it on with spirit, be entitled to look for celestial aid, when he should take the field again, to chastise his rebellious subjects, or rather tributaries. Such were *his* notions of Christianity.

Every worker in wood and wicker was therefore ordered into immediate and active service, to construct, as they should be directed by Saint Patrick, such edifices as their skill enabled them. That holy man thought,

with a sigh, however, on the necessity which compelled them to employ such perishable materials; and reflected, with pious wrath, on the splendid structures of solid marble which he had seen in Italy and Greece consecrated to the gods of the Heathens.* He approved, indeed, of the plan of turning these magnificent temples into Christian churches; but unfortunately there were none such in Ireland, as the druids never dreamed of worshipping their gods in temples made with hands; they thought with Rousseau, that their prayers would not be heard in such confinement. Besides, the Irish artizans, fourteen hundred years ago, had no notion of working in stone and mortar, nor even in the humbler department of brick-laying, in which they have lately become knowing; and confined

* At this period, many of the temples in Rome and Greece were still under their pristine gods, though Christianity was become the established faith. See Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Vol. VI.

their attention solely to timber-work, never making any deviation therefrom, except in, sometimes by way of decoration, filling up the unseemly interstices of the wickers with brown clay; which clay, also, was further serviceable in preventing the rude and unmannerly entrance of the cold winds, that had taken somehow or other a mischievous liking to brush and blow upon the bodies of the honest inmates of the Irish cabins.

The idea of these churches was so new and singular, to a people who had been hitherto accustomed to temples formed of growing oaks, and often nothing above their mountain sacrifices but the open sky, that it created no small stir among the various classes of persons who composed Logaire's court. The churches were even made the subject of indecent witticism, by those whose delight it was to excite laughter at the expence of every feeling and principle of propriety;—a sort of disposition, which has come down, by hereditary right, as an heir-loom to their descend-

ants of the present day, many of whom, if we may be allowed to trace them by this marked sign, have found their way into the neighbouring islands, to the great annoyance of the graver members of the "social compact," upon whose wigs and noses, in particular, their wit usually perches. I may not put down all the *bon mots* and *maux mots* which have been transmitted on this subject; but shall content myself with the simple observation of old Camderoch, who remarked,

"That he was now an oul', oul', oul' man, and he had never heard of such a thing in his life before, as a god taking a fancy to live in a wicker house, when sure and sure, the skey, and all the stars in it, was a grander and a purttier place a-deal nor the palace itself, though it didn't become him to be saying it, in respect of living in it."

The jesting humour of the courtiers, however, did not confine itself to words; for it frequently made its appearance in a more tangible form, under the superintendence of

the redoubted Lokite, formerly commemorated as a genuine disciple of the mischief-working deity of Scandinavia; and I grieve to say, that the same Lokite was making dangerous progress in rendering Angus a proselyte to this heathenish divinity, for the purpose of obtaining more completely the co-operation of the young Caledonian in the execution of his wicked pranks. Man, alas! is a weak and vacillating creature; no sooner has he embraced one religion, than the slightest revolution of events converts him to another, till he often so bewilders himself in the maze of doubts and opinions, that death, who has unfortunately no concern in his decision, generally finds him couching, like the patriarch Issachar, between two burdens.

These two associates first set themselves to work upon a handsome church or cathedral, which was begun in the very vicinity of the palace, for the accommodation of the court, and was an object of great interest, on account of its novelty and the excellence of the work-

manship—surpassing, in this respect, the palace itself, which was of a more ancient and ruder structure, except in that part of it which had been added or rebuilt by Nial of the Nine Hostages. Their first prank was to terrify the poor workmen, by making strange noises about their cabins during the night; and threatening them with awful voice to desist from their unhallowed task. These simple fellows, who had before had their own doubts of the propriety of building so novel an edifice, were, in consequence, terribly alarmed, and entreated piteously to be excused from proceeding farther. But the king gave peremptory orders that they should proceed. It was, in truth, a pitiful spectacle to see these wood and wicker men handling their materials as if they doubted whether every inch of them did not contain some evil spirit ready to break loose upon them; and casting fearful looks around them at every stroke of their mallets, to see that no gigantic demon had stationed himself behind them, for

the purpose of bringing his infernal claws in hostile contact with their bodies. They still went on with their work, however, for their fear of offending the king prevailed over their fear of the spirits.

When the Lokite found that they could not interrupt the work by these means, he altered his measures, forming the intention of terrifying, by one grand stroke, not only the simple artificers, but the whole court, without excepting even Saint Patrick himself, whom he had found guilty of hearing his best jokes with the most provoking gravity. His idea was to form a gigantic figure of hay, with a head of wicker-work, into which a pair of torches could be fitted, so as to throw their light on two broad holes, which represented the eyes of the figure. This figure was to be elevated, during the night, on the highest part of the new church, that it might make a proper impression on whoever should have the chance to perceive it. When the proposal was first made to Angus, he demurred

loudly against carrying the joke so far; but the Lokite, whose zeal for mischief was unquenchable, urged him hourly with so much eagerness, that, at last, he got the youth enticed out to the woods, where they began laboriously to construct the giant's head, and very soon completed this darling invention to their satisfaction. It was secretly conveyed, after night-fall, to the part of the edifice for which it had been intended, and the associates lay anxiously in wait to observe the effect of their unhallowed prank.

The first person who happened to see this apparition glaring down from the walls of the church with portentous menace, was old Dranshogle; whose brain having not been over clear since his memorable visit to the dog-kennel, judged that this ominous vision was bound on an expedition expressly designed for the capture of his person, on account of some rude jokes he had ventured to break at the expence of the church; for his adventure with the terrible ghost of the butler had not

cured him of his invincible habit of using the *argumentum ad jocum*, a mode of producing conviction which has been feloniously banished by modern logicians, headed by Dr Beattie, who rendered himself famous for the discovery, that Truth could only be defended by scurrility and sneering. Dranshogle did not wait to take a second peep at the church demon, but forthwith ensconced himself behind a quantity of raw hides, which had been doffed from the backs of half-a-score of bullocks the day before, to allow the royal cooks to get at the more eatable portions of these delicious animals. The terrified wit crept so completely under the hides, indeed, that he brought himself into no small danger of suffocation; and this situation, dreadful as it was, became still more so from an event which happened in the sequel.

O'Grushelan had been dispatched by the king for a small jar of Caecuban, a quantity of which he had procured at great trouble and expence from Marseilles, at that time a

distinguished continental port. Now, the way to the private cellar where this wine was kept lay close by the mound of hides, under which Dranshogle had burrowed, with the belief, perhaps, that the church demon might possibly mistake him for a slaughtered bullock. The butler was accordingly proceeding in the way of his duty to the cellar, when his eyes encountered the terrible figure on the church. He meditated, poor man, an instant retreat when he saw this horrid goblin, but his legs proved rather refractory in their obedience, and, inverting the order of nature, carried him at a staggering pace in a retrograde direction, like a Tipperary sow when she sees the wind, a faculty of perception these animals are well known to enjoy. He bethought himself, in this trying situation, of having recourse to his arms by way of counterpoise to preserve his balance, and for this purpose stretched them forth with fear and trembling; it would have been more to his comfort had he extended them in

a contrary direction, for, at this moment, a stone or some inequality of the ground tripped up his heels, and he fell—βοὸς ἴφι κταμένοιο *—on the aforesaid hides, directly over the ribs of the unfortunate Dranshogle, which, unless they had been protected by an unusual covering of corpulency, his own personal property, and eke the additional intervention of the hides, must infallibly have undergone the terrible fate of Dagon of Gath. Dranshogle was now certain that he was in the power of the dreadful demon of the church, and would have roared aloud for earthly help, had not his utterance been cramped by the rib-protecting hides, which he had also stuffed in quantities around the "divine" portion of his upper man. The butler was no less sure that his fall was to be attributed to none other than the goblin, and lay sweating with trepidation on the body of poor Dranshogle, as ponderous and immoveable as the nightmare.

* "With the force of a slaughtered ox."
Homer. Iliad. γ. 375.

By this time several of the domestics had been alarmed at the apparition, and crowded close to one another breathless and trembling. Angus, who had been stationed to watch the operations of fear, to signal to the Lokite who was in the church the success of the device, thought it now his cue to give a loud whistle; upon which signal of success the daring Lokite set the whole image on fire, by way of finishing his trick with a grand catastrophe. Angus, to whom he had not dared to communicate this part of his design, was greatly enraged at his accomplice, expecting nothing less than the conflagration of the whole structure. This dreaded event, however, it was *not* the Lokite's purpose to bring about, and he took effectual care to prevent it.

The sight of the blazing image was a phenomena which convinced every body in the palace, the apostle only excepted, that the building of this wooden church was a thing that the whole inhabitants of the invisible

world would set themselves to oppose. The king looked on it with blank dismay, for he had set his heart on forwarding these churches, the more grievously to pique his enemies of the druidical party. Patrick assured him that it was all a trick of the Druids themselves, and that he did not believe any supernatural agency had been employed in the case. He had, however, as every man would have had in his circumstances, some strong misgivings of faith in respect of the apparition which had been seen before the breaking out of the fire.

Nobody, however, would advance towards the church to see whether or not the whole machinery had been put in motion by some human enemy. The apostle at last ventured, with a firm pace, repeating the Lord's prayer with great deliberation. It was soon observed by the spectators, who watched every event with uncommon attention, that, at every step which Patrick advanced, the blaze of the fire grew dimmer besides diminishing

very perceptibly in volume; and, by the time he was within a bowshot of the church, it disappeared altogether. The Lokite, in truth, had managed matters so, by means of a quantity of moist earth he had provided, that not an ember remained to light Saint Patrick's steps when he entered the church.

The multitude shouted "a miracle! a miracle!" which had so strong an effect on O'Grushelan that he forgot he was personating the night-mare, and struggled hard to get on his legs again, for the purpose of obtaining a wider range of vision by the elevation of his head and the eyes which were therein. This, however, was a feat which the rotundity of his belly strenuously opposed, and he rolled about on the top of the suffocating Dranshogle, with a motion not unlike the floundering of a stranded whale, or the flapping of a goose mired among birdlime, till he actually squeezed out a feeble groan from the interior regions of Dranshogle's body, that made its way good to the open air through

all the thick folding of hides which opposed its passage. The butler, fancying this groan to proceed from a revivified bullock, was stimulated to fresh exertion; but it would not do, and he was obliged to betake himself to a species of locomotion which he had laid aside for more than half a century, although, like myself and most of my readers, he had, at one period of life, found it a mode of travelling extremely convenient. He, accordingly, crept, or rather crawled, towards the crowd on all-fours, wincing and groaning all the way, from the rough salutation the stones thought proper to bestow on his cumbrous paunch; the said stones not being accustomed to have such a batch of tallow trailed over them. The first person he found was Angus, who was enjoying the perplexity of his fellow-courtiers with great delight. When the Caledonian perceived the huge corpus of the butler moving towards him, he exclaimed, with some wonder,

"Wu the dear beteach us, what's this no'? I think we be a' bewutch't or bede'il't, for

ony thing I can see: guide us, gin it binna that butler body again has been either dung owre or fa'n awal i'the stramash, an' hasna as muckle owrance o' himsel' as win up on the feet o' him. I wonner what taks him in amang hamshoghs ava, when he hasna the gumption tae staun on his shanks like ither fo'k, but lies doun aye, an' sprawls and spraughles like a swine at the piggin', or a dog rubbin' the flaes aff him."

"For the sake of your mother, dear," said the quadruped butler, "if ye wud just give me a touch of help, till I wud be getting my legs inunder me; ye never done a better thing, nor a more charitable, since ye first clapt your eye upon the sun."

"An' what," returned Angus, "are ye aye doin' hniuslin' an' snuistin' wi' the nose o' ye i'the yird, like a brute beast, every ither day, can ye tell me? It's no owre a day syne, that I saw ye lyin' waumlin' that vera gate in ane o' the garden plots, an' my freen' Bryan, blawin' like a forfoughten cock, to set

ye on your en' again. Patience! an' ye tak thae wuntlins and tireevies this way, we'll hae tae get the road postet tae haud ye up; gin ye wadna like it better tae be putten in a wicker frame, an' set i'the middle o' the new kirk tae wauk it, for thae bogles that are like to ding a' things tapselteerie."

This proposal of becoming goblin-watch, the butler, at this instant, had no particular relish for; but he was very anxious to get his legs "inunder" him again, though he could not persuade Angus to any sort of exertion, except laughing at his helpless situation.

The noise and bustle of the multitude, who were loud in their expressions of wonder at the power of Saint Patrick over the terrible apparition, now reached the ears of the bewitched Dranshogle, who still lay snug under the hides; and recognising, among the multifarious sounds, several known voices, he thought he might peep out of his lurking place, to see where he was, and what was go-

ing forward. It was sometime before he could make out the cause of the bustle; but he, at last, obtained some indistinct notion of the affair, by piecing together the ἐπεα πτεροεντα, or flying words of the multitude, which came confusedly to his ears, like the speeches Sir John Mandeville had the pleasure of hearing in Iceland, thawed out of the air, where they had hung bound up in frost during the winter. * He learned enough to understand, that Saint Patrick would stand between him and his spiritual enemy; and he, accordingly, took his way after the creeping butler, whom he found "biding the pelting of the pitiless storm," which was falling upon him in the shape of "jibes and jeers and cutting jests," from the mouth of the Caledonian. Dranshogle, who recollected that he owed the butler a good turn for his unmercifully treading on his belly, began to lend his help; and

* See the Travels of Sir J. M. in Purchas' Pilgrims.

Angus, who was "forscomfist," as he said, with laughing, joined his "helping haund," and restored O'Grushelan again to his natural means of locomotion.

The Lokite escaped undiscovered, exulting no less at the success of his prank, than Logaire would have done, had he defeated O'Neil and the king of Leinster in one day. He had not, however, been altogether so successful as he imagined; for his design was to make them desist from building the church altogether; but from the blaze of the image ceasing on the approach of Saint Patrick, the workmen were so well assured, by ocular demonstration, of his superior power, that they never demurred to go on with their task the following day, with as much alacrity as nothing had occurred.

The Apostle was equally successful at another time, when the building of Armagh cathedral was retarded by the Lokite coming, concealed in the skin of an immense bull, in the night, and pulling down what was built

during the day; for Patrick boldly watched his operations, and would have caught him, had he not taken a wonderful leap from the walls, and thus effected his escape. The mark of the bull's hoof made by this leap has remained distinct these fourteen hundred years, and is still shown near Armagh. *

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* Dr Campbell's Strict.

CHAPTER XIV.

This is no tale, but should you *think*,
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.
WORDSWORTH'S *Ballads.*

THE rumour of these extraordinary miracles did more to further the mission than any other mode of working on the feelings of the Irish, which could have been tried; and the Apostle was too anxious for success to endeavour to undeceive them when they thus interpreted any accidental occurrence, although he had the firm integrity not to use any unfair means or juggling arts to force such opinions on his converts. The truth is, he had more of the frailties of human nature, great as he was, than his brother Apostles in the New Testament, who were mistaken by

the Greeks at Lystra for *avatars* of their gods.

Notwithstanding the wonderful disappearance of the blazing apparition, however, and the no less wonderful safety of the church, not a wicker of which had been singed, so well had the Lockite spread his earth, and so completely had he removed every vestige of the ashes, the minds of the more superstitious about the palace were still seriously disturbed with apprehensions of danger from their spiritual annoyers. This was in consequence of the inexhaustible invention of the Lokite, who took advantage of the spirit of alarm which was afoot, to teaze and torment every body whom his mischievous caprice chanced to pitch upon. These pranks he usually directed against the new converts, or those whose minds were wavering in doubt how they might best insure their salvation. It was, indeed, a very blameable sort of amusement, but he had got so inveterate a habit of plagueing others, that he could no more wean himself of it than a

gambler can from running to a dice-box or a drunkard to his bottle. Angus had deserted him in consequence of his setting fire to the image, and other things of which his conscience did not at all approve; and although he was so deeply implicated himself that he durst not unmask his associate, the Lokite determined to be avenged on the Caledonian for his dereliction; and he set every device in motion to torment him.

It may be remembered that, on the departure of Angus from the cabin at Glendalagh, to accompany Bryan to Dalriogh, the Caledonian had not neglected to remark that little Norah was a pretty, sweet-looking girl; and that, on the other hand, she had adopted the notion of his being a handsome clever youth. When Angus found her an inmate of the palace on his return from the northern campaign, he thought that *in the court dress* she looked prettier than any other attendant on the princess he had ever before seen, and he

became anxious to have himself recognised by the little maid as an *old* acquaintance.

To this Norah was not perhaps averse, but her residence at the court, short as it had been, had divested her of much of her simplicity, which had been so finely fostered in the seclusion of the Ban Forest. She did not absolutely coquet, indeed, but she was not perhaps so open and frank in her manner as he would have found her before she left the cabin. After some little time, however, they began to have a mutual understanding of looks and sighs, which, on the lapse of another interval, was succeeded or rather intermixed with verbal communications of no equivocal sort.

There was one thing, however, which Angus had much at heart with respect to Norah, and in which he found she showed more obstinacy than from the natural sweetness of her disposition he could have well anticipated. This was her thorough conversion to Christianity, to which he himself was strongly at-

tached, notwithstanding his co-operation with the Lokite in frightening the church-builders. Now Norah had been carefully instructed, by desire of the princess, in the Catholic principles and doctrines, which, in that primitive age, savoured little of modern popery, and agreed nearly, as Usher has satisfactorily proved, with the tenets of the present Protestant divines.* To these the girl had in part given her assent, and made such progress in knowledge, that she was deemed fit to be initiated into the church by the sacred rite of baptism. She could not, however, by any persuasion be brought to submit to the ceremony, and she either could not or would not give any reason for her refusal. This strange scruple gave Angus a good deal of uneasiness, for he had imbibed the notion, which was a very early prejudice in the church,

* See Usher on the religion of the Ancient Irish, *passim*.

that no person who died unbaptized could ever be admitted into heaven.

In proportion as his love increased, his solicitude on this point increased along with it, and made him very unhappy; for his affection was so strong, that it made him look beyond the grave, and every morning that dawned found him anxiously inquiring whether no accident had befallen Norah during the night. Then the sweetness with which the little girl claimed her freedom of acting for herself in this important affair, was so bewitching that he could not bring himself to urge her compliance. She seemed, indeed, to have derived her antipathy to initiations from her mother, as a fixed hereditary disposition; at least no other explanation is so probable. This was Bryan's own notion on the subject, and he swore by the memory of his Evelyn, that he would never press the girl to it if she should live to the age of Conla, the oldest queen who ever lived in Ireland.

The Lokite soon came to learn how these

matters stood between the lovers; and as he conjectured rightly, that it was the strongest desire which Angus had to remove her scruples, the mischief worker resolved to take advantage of it to annoy him. There was a favourite arbour in the gardens, composed of ivy, festooned on trellis-work, and having two fine bushes of dark green box covering the entrance, and situated in a remote and secluded quarter. Now, as the winter frosts did not strip these evergreens of their leaves, it was as fresh looking and close as in summer; but, above all, it charmed Norah, because it had a distant likeness to her little bower at Glendalagh, which was twined with her recollections amidst all the splendour of the court. The ivy-arbour was accordingly visited every day, when Norah could steal away unperceived, to recal the simple and lovely scenes of her forest-dwelling, and picture in fancy the beauty, and the sunshine, and the fragrance of flowers, and the humming bees, and the birds flitting and chanting among the

bushes, which had once so much charmed her, and which she thought would never again seem so sweet and so delightful. Angus, with the keen vigilance of a lover, soon made the discovery of the nymph's favourite haunt, and, with a lover's timidity, hinted a request to be admitted as an attendant to the solitude; using a sentiment to enforce his request, which a Frenchman of our own times has been ignorant and vain enough to claim as exclusively his own, namely, that solitude is pleasant, but it is necessary to have some one to tell that we feel solitude pleasant.* Norah

* I would here set down the thought, in the words of the original document, whence I extracted it, to prove its genuine antiquity; but, alas! the French have now forgot the language of their ancestors, and would not understand it. The thought itself they never forget, even in a foreign land; for, if we may believe M. de la Croix, the French emigrants of Louisiana often travel many hundred miles, from the interior to New Orleans, with no other business, except the desire of finding people to tell that solitude is a fine thing.

refused in words, but consented with her eyes; and Angus had become so ready an interpreter of Norah's natural language, that he was not over attentive to what she had learned artificially. In process of time, he came to make the arbour his daily haunt; for when Norah did not come there, an event which sometimes occurred, he could spend the solitary hours in raptured recollections of her beauty, and her artless grace, and the sweet music of her voice, and the witchery of her dimpled smiles, till his fancy was charmed into a waking vision of unequalled delight.

Was it not barbarous to cloud such a scene of pastoral happiness, by working on the unsuspecting simplicity of the nymph, whose presence it was that called all its enchantment into existence? Was it not cruelly inhuman? In this wicked world, however, there are people whom it grieves to see others happy, and whose joy it is to give pain to their fellow mortals, that they may feast their eyes with the contemplation of suffering. The Lokite

had high claims to be ranked with such people, and he proved it largely in the circumstances now under review. His first movement was to conceal himself behind the arbour, to procure intelligence from the lovers' own mouths, which he might turn against them. He had not over-listened long, before he found that the scruples of Norah to be baptized formed an often recurring topic of conversation; and, in one scene of innocent endearment, Angus at last wrung from her a slow consent to go to the font *to-morrow*. "To-morrow!" re-echoed the mischievous Lokite from behind the arbour in an assumed female voice, which he uttered through a long tube to give it more effect. Norah shrieked, and swooned in the arms of her astonished lover; and the Lokite escaped unperceived.

This was a fatal blow to the darling wish of poor Angus, for though Norah recovered from her swoon, with a pale face and quivering lip, she could not be persuaded to believe that it was not her mother's spirit, who had

appeared to forbid her initiation. As soon as the Lokite learned that his trick had taken effect, he followed it up by one more daring; for, on the following night, he persuaded one of the female domestics, whom he kept in his interest, to dress herself in white, chalk* her face, and, in this guise, to get in through the lattice of Norah's apartment at midnight, with a light, to wake her suddenly out of sleep, and, having terrified her with threatening gestures, to extinguish the light, and make a precipitate retreat. His female accomplice, who had taken mortal offence at Norah's beauty, honouring this conspicuous attribute of the pretty maid with the title of ugliness, went through her part of the scene with so much

* I am not without apprehension, that I will here be accused of a similar blunder to Shakespeare's account of a shipwreck on the coast of Bohemia; for Sir John Carr tells us, that, "in Ireland, there is no *chalk*; the moisture of the climate being fatal to venomous animals." Strang. in Irel. p. 200. 4to edit.

zeal, that the little girl was almost robbed of her senses, and screamed out most piteously. It was in vain, after such repeated visitations from her departed mother as she imagined, to speak to her of the font; the very thoughts of it made her colour fade, and her blue eyes grow dim; and Angus, though he was not without suspicions of the Lokite, was unable to detect him, and could do nothing but grieve in hopelessness of saving his beloved girl.

It was by these and similar devices of wags and enemies, that the missionary labours of Saint Patrick were often completely non-plused, and in a way too which he could neither explain nor circumvent. He was much grieved at this occurrence with regard to Norah; for he had taken a great interest in the girl, not only on account of her own beauty and simplicity, (and he has no claims to human nature whom a young, innocent, pretty maid does not interest,) but from the lasting obligations he was under both to her father and her fa-

voured lover. He endeavoured to soothe her with all his eloquence, and, in such cases, he knew how to lay aside his commanding dignity; but nothing which could be done could eradicate from her thoughts the awful impression which the wicked Lokite had made by his devices. It increased her troubles also in an extreme degree that she now saw no hopes of being united to her dear Angus; for it was a rule, which was never infringed, that the Catholics should not marry one who had not been regularly initiated into the Holy Church; and Angus was too well grounded in his attachment to his religion to break through so marked a regulation. Norah would have now willingly consented and yielded up her own scruples, but no earthly power could persuade her to disobey the command, to refuse her acquiescence which she imagined she had received so unequivocally from her mother. It may be said, that Angus ought to have procured a *dispensation* to break through the rule, either from

Saint Patrick himself or from Rome: those who think so are given to know that dispensations and *indulgences to commit sin* were not then in fashion even at corrupt Rome, and the good Bishop Celestine, whom, in the first volume, I have unwarrantably called Pope, would have stared at the Emperor himself had he requested him to pardon his sins, or grant him indulgence to commit fresh ones. Wo be to the day when this order of things was changed, and when, instead of holy rebuke and exhortation, the priest was employed

——to sell the Tantonie Bell
And pardons there in case;
Remission of sins in auld sheep-skins
Men's sauls to bring to grace.*

Though in these and similar cases Saint Patrick was baffled for a time in discovering and circumventing the devices of his enemies, the mission, upon the whole, was uncommonly

* See Ane Collection of Godly Ballads. Edinb. 1621.

successful. The new converts were extremely zealous, and the plan of building churches was carried on with great alacrity in all the Christianized parts of the island.

While these events were going on in the south, Farquhar and M'Gurdie had gone to execute their orders in the north,—the former to accomplish the conversion of the fair druidess, and the latter to obtain, if possible, the appointment of guide to young Fergus in his embassy to the sister island, for the purpose of converting him also, if that could be accomplished. To make the same journey, the prince, as we have seen, had come to a resolution: extremely foolish, no doubt, and not without great peril, should he persist in executing it; but love has no conception of folly and danger; the world's laugh and an enemy's dagger are alike disregarded, and the lover walks at ease in the midst of difficulties, which, in his cooler moments, he would have looked upon as fit only to be encountered by super-human aid. Malthuine

might perhaps have abandoned his wild journey, at least for a season, had not he learned the commission which Farquhar had received from Saint Patrick. Now the prince had remarked, that this Farquhar was a very handsome fellow, which, indeed, nobody who saw him failed to do,—and he was instantly smitten with jealousy. He forgot the solemn promise which Ethne had given him as a pledge of her affection, and took no account of her unshaken principles of rectitude, which, except perhaps in the single instance of this pledge, she had never violated; and, in this case, she was so far authorized by a conscientious regard for the performance of her father's promise, that she had made that promise an express exceptive clause.

All these Malthuine ought to have reviewed leisurely and coolly before he brought himself to doubt that she would not remain faithful to him, if not called upon to fulfil the detested promise. But the passions render us particularly inattentive to any thing which

may damp their fury, and the prince could think of nothing but the handsome missionary holding secret and stolen conversations with the fair druidess. Patrick, it must be owned, did not foresee this effect of his appointment with his usual insight into human nature; on the contrary, he wished to do all he could to further the prince's views with respect to Ethne, judging that, if a marriage could by any means be effected between them, that it would be the surest means of converting the north; for the people were strongly attached to her, and would be induced to follow her example; and it was with these views he was so anxious to bring this speedily about. He did not dream that the prince could be jealous of an inferior missionary who was so far beneath his rank; but in this he showed his ignorance of the workings of jealousy, which frequently fixes on the most unlikely objects, nay, it is not improbable, that, had he fixed on M'Gurdie instead of Farquhar, or even if old Camderoch had

thought of taking a musical peregrination to the vicinity of the grove, that Malthuine might have looked suspicious, though he might not have plunged all at once into the vortex of passion which now whirled him rapidly along with it, and drove him to set out immediately from the palace to anticipate and prevent the dreaded invasion of Farquhar, who, we may have the charity to suppose, was dreaming of nothing but the sacred interest of religion.

The king had for some time become so accustomed to the prince's strange humour, that he had ceased to take much notice of it, thinking, very wisely, that he would be sooner cured of it by allowing him to take his own way, than by teazing him with advice and instruction, which, he had candour enough to recollect, that he himself was not over fond of obeying in his youth.

Aoine did not observe her brother's singularities with so much indifference; for he had always till now treated her with so much affection and fraternal friendship, that it griev-

ed her beyond measure to see him day after day flying from all society, and wandering about in solitude. But all her tenderness could not bring him to confide his thoughts to her;—he shunned her and the world, and gave up his fancy to all the varied romance of love musings; and held society only with woods, and mountains, and lonely brooks, and the winds which roared in the forest, and the moon which sailed through the clouds, and the bright stars which sparkled and paused in the upper air, for these were in harmony with his feelings, and spread a charm over every picture which brightened in his fancy.

CHAPTER XV.

Cubierta de laurel, vervena, y juncia
Con sangue de una victima que ofrezan
Absuelven el castigo que merezen.
ERCILLA'S *Araucania*. viii. 74.

Has my foe flesh and blood, I nothing dread.
I am his man; but ****.
Oberon.

THE prince, agreeably to his resolution, set out with all haste towards the north, without taking a single attendant, or taking further leave of any one in the palace, than leaving a brief note* to his sister, that he was going a

* It has been maintained, as every one knows, that before this period the Irish had no letters; but all agree in saying, that Saint Patrick introduced them. So the text will be found correct, whatever system is adopted. See Toland and Dr Campbell.

private journey to some distance, and that they need not be alarmed for his safety. They were alarmed, however, notwithstanding this declaration; for the prince's passion for the Druidess was no secret in the palace, though he was not aware that any one knew of it besides himself, he had given what appeared to him such plausible reasons for his coasting adventures, that he imagined nobody could hesitate to ascribe it to gratitude for the protection Ethne had afforded him at Clogharnbrec, and her hazarding her own life to aid his escape. But the world has seldom the complaisance to follow out nice distinctions between gratitude, and friendship, and love; and the insatiable appetite for gossiping generally fixes upon what will yield the largest quantity of food for conjectures and whisperings, and a round of successive reports and *correct* information. It was so fourteen hundred years ago, and is so at this moment, as several of my young friends have often informed me when I was taken at unawares,

never having any wish to gratify this disordered habit of mind, and always exerting my weak authority to check its operation.

It was decided, therefore, at Tara, as soon as the departure of the prince was known, that he could have gone to no other place than the north. All agreed in one opinion, and the king was forced to believe the unwelcome intelligence. Unwelcome it was to him, for he augured nothing less than that Malthuine had designs upon the crown, and was gone to join the rebels at Rath-na-Carraig. Logaire, like most other men, judged the prince by his own passions, and as usual overlooked all the circumstances which would have proved in the most satisfactory manner that he was wrong. This notion, no explanation, which his counsellors could invent, had the power to banish from his mind; and he forthwith ordered a party of horse to set out in pursuit of the fugitive heir-elect, with peremptory orders to bring him back dead or alive. The prince, although now wonderfully

subject to mental absence in most things, was as clear-sighted as he had ever been with regard to the best means of accomplishing his romantic journey, and had, at first, anticipated some such movement to intercept him, as the king had set on foot. He had on this account disguised himself so effectually, that he could not be recognized, and, to be more secure, he had taken a wild and unfrequented path through the woods, where he knew no one would ever think of following him. By these means he successfully eluded his father's scouts, and arrived, after considerable fatigue, in the neighbourhood of the grove, having learned from a peasant that Ethne had left Dunluce.

The sun had set when he entered the confines of the wood which skirted the recesses of this sanctuary of superstition, and though he was no more afraid of walking by night than a ghost, in ordinary places and ordinary moods of mind, he could not, with all his fortitude, look on the dark wood before him un-

moved. The alternate workings of love, and hope, and fear, had often indeed carried him to wander at midnight in woods as wild and gloomy as this, without a thought of personal dread, and wrapt in deep meditation on the visionary universe of his own fancy. And, in this very journey, he had more than once advanced with fearless steps through the midnight darkness of the forests which he had to pass through, thinking of nothing but the lovely woman who had charmed him into a heavenly existence by imprinting her image on his recollections. But the fancies of a lover, however bright and strong, will sometimes be overclouded, and even his little jealousies and suspicions will sometimes give place to feelings arising from the circumstances around him. Thus it happened with the prince. His love visions and his fear of losing the fair Druidess, had "outrun by violent swiftness the current of his thoughts," *

* Shakespeare.

and left him, when he entered the forest, in a state of mind ready to yield to superstitious dread. He was jaded and depressed, and his want of vigour and energy made him feel less heroic, than when his spirits were up and full of life.

His memory also became provokingly clear, in recalling all the horrid tales which had ever reached him concerning the Druid mysteries and enchantments; and these tales combined most eloquently with the gloom of the wood to strip him of fortitude, and to transform his fearless heroism into visionary dread. He feared not any man indeed, much less the unwarlike priests of the grove, so long as they had not recourse to their enchantments; but he thought with terror on the gods and demons, whom they had at command, and whom no human strength nor fortitude could resist. He had now passed the gloomy precincts, however, and retreat was little less awful than going forward; for the black shades of the trees had closed behind him, and shut him

out from the open country, and even from the sky, which he could only see by glimpses, when the light of a solitary star fell through the thinner branches above him. To add to his perplexity, he knew not whether he was advancing, for the darkness and his fearful apprehensions had made him lose all distinct notion of his direction; and he at last came to a place so thick with underwood, that he could penetrate no farther, and was obliged to pause and look around in terrible suspense on the black trees which hung over every part of the thicket. He thought the very air had something unusual in its feel, and fancied that it oppressed his breath, and deadened and numbed the motion of his limbs; and he stood with his eyes fixed, and the sweat breaking on his forehead, as if all the terrors of the invisible world had been unveiled before him.

His terrors were not wholly without foundation, for he began to hear a low moaning voice, as of a person in confinement; but his agitation prevented him from discovering whe-

ther it was in the wood or in the air. He remembered that the Druids were said to have power over the spirits of the air, and that a chief, who had disobliged them, had been "imprisoned in the viewless winds,"* as a punishment for the offence. His voice had often been heard, also, complaining of his hard fate, and the moaning might be the voice of that very chief; and might be the prelude to a similar fate awaiting himself. The low moans were succeeded by shrieks of unearthly wildness, which came he thought from a greater distance, and made him shudder with horror; for he could not doubt that it proceeded from some hapless being, suffering torture either from the inhuman Druids, or the demons they had at their command. What made him incline rather to the latter, was the direction from which the voice came; for it seemed to come from the air, or at least from a considerable distance; and, if he had

* Measure for Measure.

not altogether lost the knowledge of his present direction, it came rather from the skirts of the wood, than from the inner recess of the grove, where the Druids celebrated their dreadful rites. Of this, however, he was quite uncertain, as the darkness prevented him from ascertaining in what direction this recess lay.

The shrieks also ceased, and there was a breathless stillness in the air around him no less awful; for he thought it was like a dark chasm, hollowed out in its bosom to envelope him, for intruding, with unhallowed foot, into the precincts of the grove. He shrunk back, and shuddered at every little breath of air he felt on his face. The very sound of his own breath made him start aghast, and the beating of his heart alarmed him with its dull and muffled sound. He was roused from this awful pause by a loud whizzing noise immediately above him, as if a flight of arrows had been shot over the trees; and he had no doubt, that it was some demon of the night hovering in the air. He was confirmed in his fears by

the dreary scream of an owl, repeated between awful pauses, while it flitted about in the darkness; for these demons often took the form of this melancholy bird.

His steed, which had entered without fear into the wood, and advanced with spirit to the copse which barred his progress, now became restive, and could not be brought to proceed into the more open part of the wood, towards which he attempted to direct it. It seemed to feel as much terror as the prince, and pawed and gasped for breath, while he tried to urge it onward. This was a strong proof to him that his terrors did not spring from fancy, as the inferior animals were then, as now, deemed more acute in perceiving the approach of ghosts and other spectres * than the most clear-sighted ghost-seer of the human race. The echo of the horse's feet as it pawed was hollow and awful, and the slight-

* Might not this notion take its rise from the belief the Druids had in the transmigration of souls?

est stirring of the leaves sounded as distant and dreary as if the prince had been entombed in a cavern. He felt a cold perspiration creeping over his flesh, and his spirit sunk within him. The low moaning was again heard at a distance, and he thought he could distinguish some words, but he could not assure himself of this; and he thought the moaning changed to the cry of a child. He had heard Angus mention that children who died before baptism, wandered thus about the woods moaning and crying over their hard lot, and the prince began to fancy that this sound which so terrified him, was the voice of one of these unhappy *Tarans*, or unbaptized children.* A loud scream soon dispelled this thought; for no child could ever utter so wild a cry.

"And is my Ethne connected with a place so awful as this?" thought Malthuine, who

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* See Brand's Popular Antiquities and Pennant's Hebrides.

had not altogether forgotten the object of his journey. "I wish I were safe in the open country again, I should never more set a foot within these mysterious woods. O if she were out of this infernal grove, I would never permit her to enter it again, though I should have to imprison her for life!"

How to get her out, however, it was not so easy to devise; and he was in no small perplexity how to extricate himself; for he thought it dangerous to venture farther into a place where he was surrounded by invisible spirits, and might in an instant be buried in the bowels of the earth, or imprisoned in the air for his temerity. His steed would not move, but stood restive and terrified, and the moaning still came at intervals on the air with the same melancholy and hollow voice. Anon, he heard other voices near him as of persons talking, and when they passed at a little distance he could hear one say,

"Don't talk to me of his strength, the spell will bind him if he had all hell at his

back; he will not easily escape I think from the bottom of the sea. I shall make him sure there till the world is burnt up,* and we shall no longer be infested with his presence."

"Christ protect me!" ejaculated the prince, who thought his fate was now decided by this ominous speech, and that he was forthwith to be enchanted into the bottom of the sea; for so great was the dread these designing priests had contrived to spread of their power, that even the prince, whose education had been superior, and who had enjoyed the enlightened instruction of Saint Patrick and the other Christian missionaries, was overawed by the mysterious threat. As he uttered these words the speakers who, he fancied, were advancing towards him, immediately disappeared.

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* The final conflagration of the world is not peculiar to Christianity. The Druids believed in it as did the ancient Persians, the Grecian Stoics, &c.

"Now I am in safety," he thought, "by the aid of Him on whom I shall henceforth rely in every difficulty; and I shall go no farther into this unhallowed wood till morning, when I shall try to prevail on my love to leave its unholy shades and fly with me to Tara."

With this design, he bethought him of discovering some cabin or shieling where he could remain till morning, as the night threatened to overcast and betokened a storm; for though the trees around him stood in death-like silence, the wind was heard at a distance in the forest, and its hollow voice, though low and feeble, was the sure foreboding of a tempest. He alighted, therefore, and led his steed back through the part of the wood he had passed, so far as he could judge of the way.

He had not gone far when he saw a light flash through the trees, as if it had proceeded from a cabin fire; but it instantly disappeared again, and he was left to grope his way in

darkness as before. He determined, however, to keep as much as possible in the direction where the light had appeared, and trusting to the power whose protection he had just claimed and obtained as he imagined, he went forward boldly. The light he could not again descry, and he began to doubt whether he had not deceived himself, when his eye caught, not a repetition of the flash, but a feeble glimmering which streamed through the opening along which he was proceeding. This he kept steadily in his eye, till he got near to the place whence it was issuing; when the low moaning voice again came to his ear as if it arose from the same place with the light; and, moreover, he now thought that the voice was like a female's, but had a strange wildness in its tone, as if it were the plaint of deep sorrow.

Ethne was the only female which his memory could call up, and he soon decided, that it was no other than the fair Druidess; and even flattered himself with the thoughts that

she was grieving for him; for that she loved, he could not doubt, after her blushing declaration she had given him on the shore at Dunluce. Perhaps her father had confined her in this remote part of the grove, (for he was now on the borders of the heath,) on account of her aiding his escape from Clogharnbrec. He advanced towards the light with trembling haste, resolved to rescue her or sacrifice his life in the attempt. He found that the light came from a small cabin on the edge of the forest, and that the moaning voice came also distinctly from the same. With much trepidation he put his eye to the chink through which the light was streaming, but could see nothing distinctly; and he was about to make his way into it without ceremony, when he observed another chink which admitted a more perfect examination of the interior; and as the moaning voice still continued, his anxiety and fear were wound up to an insupportable pitch.

What was his astonishment, when he saw

a woman, stretched out before a large fire, and her hands and feet bound to stakes, driven in the floor. It was not Ethne; for he soon saw that lovely woman advance from a different part of the cabin, and give a large horn of oil which she carried, to Calye Mulloy, the old hag of Dunluce, whom he had not before observed. There were, besides, several women in the cabin, whom he did not know, and they all wore such looks of mystery, that he had no doubt they were about to sacrifice the poor creature they had bound upon the floor, who continued to utter the most lamentable cries. He was confirmed in this belief by what followed; for they took from over the fire a cruize full of something, which, when agitated, gave out a very strong odour, and, after a number of mystical gestures and words, the oil in the horn was mingled with what was in the cruize, and Calye Mulloy repeated over the mixture a horrid jargon which the prince could not understand, carrying it, at the same time, thrice round the fire on the

hearth, according to the course of the sun. Malthuine was shocked extremely to see the beautiful Ethne engaged in such horrid mysteries of darkness; and he was still more so when he saw her walk round the lamenting victim with the same ceremonies which old Mulloy had used in going round the fire. Ethne then stooped over the victim with a knife, ready to plunge it, as the prince believed, in the breast of the unfortunate woman, and his soul shrunk within him at the sight; and he was so completely unmanned with horror, that he had not power to rush in and save the poor creature's life; but his eye was fixed, as by magic, on the long bloody-looking weapon. His fancy, in this case, however, had carried him too far, as the knife was only employed in cutting a shred from the *canabhas* which covered the victim's breast. In this shred Ethne wrapped up something which the prince could not make out, and, after waving it nine times over the victim's head, with the repetition of the mys-

tical words, she threw it into the fire.* Calye Mulloy cut another shred in the same manner; but instead of throwing it into the fire, it was given to one of the attendants, with orders to carry it to the sacred well in the grove, and to hang it on the thorn that grew on its margin.†

The prince did not know how all this incantation was to end; but it had gone far to banish his love for the fair Druidess who was engaged in it; and he was more than once on the point of rushing in and snatching the poor creature out of their hands. When he set himself to do this, however, he was restrained by he knew not what, and remained

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* This Druidical rite, which is mentioned by Pliny, is still preserved in the north of Scotland, and a minute account of it is given in Shaw's Hist. of Moray.

† This custom seems very universally spread, as it is mentioned among Persian rites in Hanway's Travels. It is still used in England, as we learn from Mr Bourne's Antiq. Vulg.; and in Ireland it is not uncommon at this day.

as he had been spell-bound; and he did not know but he might be actually enchanted, and that this horrid sacrifice, as he deemed it, might be intended to work his enthralment; for he recognized, in the voice of Calye Mulloy, that of the speaker he had heard uttering menaces in the wood. The whole posse now encircled the victim, and Ethne began to strip her to the middle, while Calye Mulloy, with a bunch of vervain, anointed her with the mixture in the cruize. Malthuine had no doubt that this was the immediate prelude to the sacrifice, and was determined to prevent it, should all the demons of Druidism rise to oppose him;—and to think of Ethne engaged in it, was too horrible to conceive.

"Ah! fool that I was," he thought with himself, "to venture my life for a woman who would embrue her hands in the blood of a defenceless creature of her own sex, in obedience to the laws of a dark and savage superstition. Methinks she looks ghastly and

fiendish, through all the charms which her countenance could once boast. Alas! that ever I should have fallen a prey to such delusion, as falling in love with such a monster!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Fallant nos oculi, vagique sensus
Oppressâ ratione mentiuntur.

PETRONIUS.

Imitated by RICHARDS.

When love deceives, and hollow friendship wears
A mask of honest seeming, who can 'scape
Deceptions?—Man was made to err.——

Fugit. Pieces.

ALL the while of these ceremonies and incantations, the poor creature on the floor had done nothing but moan, never articulating a word to implore their pity, nor so much as raising her eyes to see their unholy doings. When she felt the medicated oil, however, running down from her shoulders, she struggled hard to get loose, and succeeded in tear-

ing up the stake to which her hands were bound. She raised herself up with a wild laugh, and brandishing the stake, soon made her tormentors make the best of their way to the other end of the cabin. She seemed so furious, and her eyes rolled so wildly, that Malthuine became alarmed lest she should in her rage attack the fair Ethne, for whom this change of events had revived his concern, if not his love. The feet of the poor woman, however, were fast bound, and this alone prevented her from destroying every one in the cabin; for her fury was that of madness, and in the ravings which she now began to utter, the prince recognized the voice of poor Jenny Grougar; sadly broken, indeed, but retaining some of its former tones.

"What's this ava? what's this ava?" she went on to cry, "it I canna get a wink o' sleep, day nor night, for a wheen rank rinnin' de'ils o' witches reengin' about my lugs. But they're a' gane now," she said, in an under voice, "they're a' gane; they couldna staun'

the look o' that angel o' light that aye taks me frae 'mang them like a braun' out o' the burnin'. Baldie man! hoy Baldie! gae 'wa' an' clod on a creel fu' a' ruh-heds* on the ingle, your faether 'ill be a' wat, puir chiel, when he comes in frae the muir. O dear! there they're again," she went on, her eye having caught the figure of Calye Mulloy, "haud abye! ye scruntet like wurlyon o' the pit: haud abye! I say, or I'll gar my neives dirl aff the howlet's neb o'ye, till your e'en staun' watshod i' your head. Staun' aff your wa's, staun' aff, or I'll tak ye a riesle o'er the aul' bou't riggin' o' ye, that ye'll no green tae get the marrow o' atween this an' Beltan. There's a rung sees ye, it'll gar your heed ring again gin ye come aneth the weght o't. Sweet be wi' us! gin it binna' there again," she whispered upon seeing Ethne, whom she

* Turfs for fuel, which are cut without paring off the grass, are expressively called *ruh-heds*, i. e. rough-heads.

took for an angel, "O but I be a sinfu' cratur!" and she instantly dropped her "rung" on the floor.

Ethne came forward when she perceived the violence of the fit abated, and spoke to her in a soothing manner, taking every means which words could furnish to make her quiet. This was fuel, however, to the prince's feelings of horror; for he imputed all her gentleness to hellish deceit on the part of the druidess, that they might murder the wretched victim without suffering themselves to be injured by her wild fury. This threw him into terrible agitation, but it was somewhat quieted by the old Vaid proposing that, as it was now past midnight, they would have to adjourn the rest of the ceremonies till the night following. His first thought was to rescue the poor creature before morning; but when he reflected that she was evidently driven to distraction by their unholy proceedings, he thought it would only involve himself in danger without accomplishing his ob-

ject; for it would be impossible to conceal her till they might reach some friendly territory, and should their enemies find them they would be from bad to worse. Besides, should this victim escape them, they would immediately find a substitute to perfect their infernal purpose.

With these and the like reflections, the prince satisfied himself that every plan he could devise for saving the woman was hopeless, and as his love was fled from him with the horrid sight he had witnessed, he turned him round in heartless widowhood of thought, to return to Tara. Yet he did not leave Ethne for ever without a sigh; for she was still the same fair nymph that had won his heart, and she could still put on the bewitching air of sweetness which had so much endeared her to him, as he had leisure to remark in her conduct towards the poor victim of their superstition. But to see her the midnight priestess of a human sacrifice,—the gentle Ethne dipping her hands in human blood,

was what his fancy could never have conjectured. Love, indeed, had stolen upon him without his taking these things into consideration, and he had never given these horrid rites a moment's reflection during his journey, though, in the height of his passion, he had not hesitated to resolve that he would himself join the Druids if no other mode of access could be obtained to his Ethne.

He rode back slowly and disconsolate over the heath; for he was now clear of the wood, and hoped he might never again be involved in its mazes. Before morning, it came on to blow a violent storm, accompanied with rain, and his horse was much fatigued, so that he was forced to alight, and lead forward the jaded animal, as there was no place of shelter where he could avoid the storm. He recollected that the peasant's hut, from whom he had got tidings of Ethne's departure from Dunluce, was not far distant, and at last he was successful in finding it. He had taken care to disguise himself, so that he might not

be known, otherwise it would have been unsafe for him to have ventured at all into this hostile territory. His host only knew him for the person who had made several inquiries about the Arch-Druid the day before, and on that account, although a stranger, the peasant kindly received him as a friend.

Malthuine told his host how he lost his way; but as he had forgot something of importance, about two days' journey farther south, he would have to return thither, as soon as his steed and himself were a few hours refreshed by rest.

"It isn't perhaps any thing about the sacrifice you'll be after?" said the inquisitive host, in a sentence so well constructed, as he thought that it contained no direct question.

"What sacrifice do you mean?" said the prince. "The private one which was to be performed to-night?"—taking advantage of what he had seen not to betray himself.

"Nay, I have not been hearing any thing of that; but there is to be a very grand one

soon I can tell you,—such a one as never was know'd in the grove, if they cud once get houl' of her."

"Of whom?" said the prince anxiously.

"Oh! and troth you may ax again before I cud tell ye; but it's to be the grandest affair was ever know'd in Ireland."

"But you said *her*, did you not?" returned Malthuine.

"Yes, and troth I did, to be sure. She's to be a virgin, and of royal blood, so be they can catch houl' of her."

"They have not got her yet then?" said the prince.

"No, but they will though, and then we'll get the country swept of them Christians; for the gods will not do any thing till once this virgin bes got."

"And do you know nothing of a woman that was to be sacrificed on the edge of the wood?" said the prince, turning from the subject, in which he was interested, lest his host might suspect him.

" O! bless your heart, a sacrifice! it wud be a pig, or somethin' for the recovery of that poor cratur that has lost her seven senses, that Ethne, long life to her, has been so kind and good to, as she is to every thing besides. Wasn't it herself that com'd, when my Kitty dear was so bad and bad; and she wud have been bad to this day, I'm sure of it, had she not been the restoring of her."

The prince, during this speech, could scarcely restrain his emotion, so as to keep up his assumed character, when he discovered his egregious mistake in the midnight ceremonies he had witnessed at the cabin, and thought of the injustice he had done the young Druidess, in supposing her to be presiding at a human sacrifice, when she was doing all that her knowledge and her religion dictated, for the recovery of an unfortunate woman from madness.* He knew not, in-

* In these early ages, women were as much skilled in physic as men, particularly among the Druids. See Northern Antiq. II. 100, and Mem. de la Chevalerie.

deed, how that madness had been caused; but though he had known the fate of poor Grougar, he would have found an excuse for Ethne. The intended sacrifice of a virgin, however, recurred to his mind; and he could with difficulty persuade himself, that she was innocent of being concerned in these bloody doings. Suspicion was also busy in suggesting to him, that his sister was not safe, when such infernal machinations were on foot; for they might carry her off from the palace before any one was apprised of her danger. Now, although romantic love had withdrawn his attention from her kind caresses, he still loved Aoine with all the affection of a brother; and if those ministers of hell, as he called the Druids, got her once into their power, he knew not what might be the consequences.

In the morning he stept out into the fields, while his entertainer was putting his horse to rights, for the purpose of musing on the best mode of extricating himself out of the diffi-

culties he was now in. Ethne appeared to his fancy more charming than ever, from the tender attentions she bestowed on this poor woman; and the peasant's eulogium had taken deep hold of his attention.—"She has been so kind and so good to us, as she is to every body besides," were words that he could not forget, and with the recollection of them came the image of the lovely woman whose character they so eloquently told,—and all that she had done for him in saving him from the murderous hands of O'Neil. And he remembered how sweetly she smiled on him at Dunluce, when she overcame the struggle between love and principle, and held out her hand to him as a token of her affection. His eye also caught the ring which she had then put on his finger; he pressed it to his lips, and vowed he would never again harbour an injurious notion against her. He could now leave her, he thought, with security, and return to protect his sister, whom, he doubted not, they would exhaust every de-

vice to surprise and carry off to their bloody altars. With this work of human murder, he could not now bring himself to associate the fair Druidess; and he flattered himself with the notion, that the old priests took care not to acquaint her with such horrid transactions. In a word, his love blinded him to every thing which might damp its flame; and he even rejected his suspicions of the handsome missionary, as derogating from the nobleness of her mind.

While he was thus musing, at one time looking towards the grove, and at another towards the south, where his sister was surrounded with snares, he observed a person at some distance, muffled in a large *fillead* or cloak, making towards the cabin. "Who could this be?" he thought with himself; "some person, perhaps, belonging to O'Neil, who had got notice of his disguise, and had been sent to trace him and way-lay him. Perhaps a scout sent by his father to watch his movements, and, if possible, bring him back

to the palace." Whoever it might be, it became him, in his present circumstances, to be upon his guard; and he, accordingly, got as quickly as he could behind a rising ground, till he in the cloak was arrived at the cabin, and had time to be entered into conversation with the host within.

The prince then hastened to the lattice to listen whether he were concerned in the movements of this mysterious looking person, and, if he were, to take his measures accordingly. At the first sound he heard of the stranger's voice, he immediately knew that it was Farquhar, the handsome missionary; and this discovery soon put him in a flutter of irresolution. For the presence of this man, of whom he had entertained suspicions, soon put to flight his firm persuasion of the fidelity of Ethne to her pledge of love; and he thought it might be as well if he remained at hand to prevent her being drawn in to admire a person so inferior to him in every thing but personal appearance. But the danger of his

sister, which ceased not to haunt him, was a cause of perplexity so distressing, that he could not drive it from his mind, and this was not lightened by part of the conversation he now heard in the cabin. Farquhar had also been obliged to disguise himself and his intentions, otherwise his expedition would have instantly been terminated in martyrdom, and Farquhar was not one of those who looked upon the stake or the gibbet as the summit of earthly glory, although he was zealous enough, and brave enough, in the good cause, when these did not threaten. He, accordingly, to save his person, and, in the second place, to further his designs in the conversion of the fair Druidess, gave out that he wished to be entered as a probationary Bhaird in Brassail's establishment,—a situation where he knew nothing would be required of him, except committing to memory a daily portion of verses.

The peasant, to whom he expressed his intention, immediately launched out in his lo-

quacious manner on the splendour which would be exhibited in the intended virginal sacrifice, and, in his ignorant rambling way, dropt such expressions as left no doubt in the mind of the prince that his sister was the express object of their hellish design; though the speaker himself scarcely knew what he was talking of, and though no one but the prince, whose fears were all afloat, could have made such an interpretation. The peasant's mind seemed to be as much engrossed with the subject as Malthuine's, for he could be brought to talk of nothing else, and though Farquhar put various questions to him to discover a clew whereby to regulate his own actions, he still got round to this shocking topic at the conclusion of every answer. These horrid murders, indeed, which the Druids dignified by the name of sacrifices, were of late beginning to have a greater effect on the minds of the vulgar than they had ever had before, and though they appalled and terrified them, they looked upon the sacrificing priest

somewhat in the light of an executioner, and consequently as in part forfeiting his sacred character; and this feeling, more than any other circumstance, gave the Catholics great advantage over the Irish Druids.

The prince was, in this manner, in a distressing state of uncertainty how to act, and so nicely were the motives which influenced him matched in their strength, that he made resolutions and abandoned them again every instant. One while he thought he might venture to see the Druidess, and influence her in favour of his sister, should these inhuman monsters succeed in the design he with so much certainty imputed to them. Another, he would accuse himself of delaying a moment to set out to protect Aoine, and start forward to make amends for the fault, and the thoughts of being so near his Ethne without speaking to her, would again check him, and put him upon finding an excuse for lingering near her. At last, by one desperate effort, he made an unalterable resolution to go to Tara, influen-

ced thereto by the hopes of speedily returning to the north with an army to suppress O'Neil's rebellion, when he could see his beloved Druidess with more safety both to himself and her. Inconsistent as this conduct of the prince may seem, in wandering so far to see the Druidess, and returning again without interchanging a word or a sigh, it is no more than an additional instance of the capricious workings of the passions. He mounted his steed, therefore, and, not without many strong wishes to change his resolution, directed his way to the south, while Farquhar went to present himself before the venerable Brassail, to solicit admission to the probationary study of a Bhaird.

The prince's apprehensions for his sister were not without foundation, for the Druidical Conclave had solemnly announced that their gods had commanded the sacrifice of a virgin of high rank, and, to make the offering acceptable, they had themselves extended this high rank to royalty itself. Now, though

there were other princesses in Ireland besides the daughter of Logaire, at the courts of the subordinate kings of Leinster, Connaught, and the rest of the provincial sovereignties, yet none of these would be in equal estimation with the gods as the Princess Royal of all Ireland. When horrid deeds are planned, they seldom fail for want of men to execute them; and such men have a wonderful quickness of discernment in finding others who may be engaged to assist them. Their black design was no sooner resolved upon, than they began to plot how it was to be accomplished. Their intelligence from the court, where a confidential spy was retained in pay, induced them to sound the Lokite on the subject, not doubting of his hostility to Christianity from the wicked pranks which their spy had cunningly traced to this redoubted disturber of peace. The Lokite was glad to be employed in mischief; and though his own devices had never gone to such enormity as this proposed to do, his feelings were so

far blunted by continually preying upon the happiness of others, that, without much difficulty, he consented to make one in the plot; and every invention was put in action for carrying off the young princess to the bloody altars of the Druidical grove.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ramos debent fideles portare, id est bona opera.
VENERAB. BED. Tom. vii. 369.

Lithe and listen gentlemen
And ladies, I pray you all,
I say and sing of as gay a wedding,
As never yet did befal.
Old Ballad.

WHILE this dark and bloody plot was in operation,—and it was impossible to bring it to a conclusion in one day,—Farquhar was fortunate enough in securing his reception at the grove, and began to cultivate the favour of Brassail with all diligence, in order to insinuate himself into the good opinion of his daughter. The old Arch-Druid himself, it was hopeless to think of awakening from his delusion, and Saint Patrick had given him po-

sitive instructions to direct all his labours to bring about the conversion of Ethne. His gentle inoffensive manners soon gained him the acquaintance of all, and he was even permitted to be present at some of the minor ceremonies performed in the grove, though he could not, without the initiation which he could not in conscience go through, be present at any of the greater mysterious rites. This, however, was not the case with the grand festival of the Missletoe, the most splendid of all the Druid ceremonies, Beltein, perhaps, excepted; for the more striking rites of their religion the Druids made as public as possible, to impress the minds of their followers, while they as carefully concealed what was awful and bloody in the seclusion of the thickest woods.

This festival has often been confounded by the excessive learning of my brother antiquaries with another held in December called Yule, in which the ceremonies were very similar. The Catholics, with their usual prone-

ness to imitation, piously stole as many of the rites of both as they thought they could turn to account in embellishing the feast of Christmas, and the Protestants have not been backward to receive the stolen goods, although they are now rather the worse for the wear of fourteen hundred years. Winter, indeed, has been always the season of feasting and merriment in the northern countries,

—— "Hiems ignava colono."

The Druids took advantage of this to multiply their winter festivals, and seduce the imagination of their devotees, by their splendid show and the striking display of natural emblems of the gods and of their power.

The festival of the Missletoe was the New Year's Day of the Druids, and was always held on the sixth day of the March moon, at which period they invariably began their lunar year. It took its name from a beautiful evergreen, which is found growing on trees, particularly in orchards, and on elms, oak,

and mountain-ash, in the manner of ivy, only that, instead of rising from the ground like it, the roots are fixed in the bark of the trees on which it grows. This singular plant was esteemed by the Druids a sovereign remedy in all diseases; but particularly, as a fine emblem of man's dependence on Providence, from its trusting wholly to the nourishment of the branch it springs from. Its uncommon mode of growth also was esteemed an emblem of their own mysteries, for no man could tell how the seed was sown whence the missletoe grew, and yet it was found on the high branches of elms and oaks, where its berries could not have been carried by the winds, like thistle down, or the winged seeds of the sycamore. It is likely, that the Druids themselves knew, although they concealed it, that the thrush and other birds, which fed on the berries, were the gardeners employed by nature to plant this pretty evergreen through the forests. On all these accounts, this shrub was of the first importance in the ceremony;

but, unfortunately, it could not always be found, particularly in northern parts, such as the forests of Caledonia; and in these cases they were forced to substitute ivy in its room.* Whether the missletoe grew naturally in Brassail's grove, or whether he had cunningly discovered the means of rearing it artificially, I know not; but on this festival there was a particular spot in the woods where it was found in abundance for all the purposes of the ceremony.

Before we come to the rites themselves, however, it will be necessary to take notice of an event of as great moment in this history as the annual return of a holiday. This was no less than the marriage of the fair Ethne with the rebel chief O'Neil.

We have seen how solicitous O'Neil was,

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* Mr Shaw seems to confound the missletoe with the ivy, in mentioning the custom still preserved in the North of Scotland, of cutting wreaths of evergreens on the tenth of March. Hist. of Moray, p. 232.

notwithstanding his occasional scepticism to pry into futurity concerning this marriage, and how overjoyed he was when young Fergus volunteered to go to consult the famed Merlin of Caledonia, concerning this, and the result of his other projects of ambition. At this time he deemed that Ethne was in the power of his enemies, and could not, except by some grand turn of fate, or stroke of policy, be recovered. Her return to the grove he had no hesitation in ascribing to the former, and it was his policy to have the marriage performed with all due speed, to prevent the recurrence of such untoward events as had nearly deprived him of this main pillar of his air-built castle. As it was necessary, however, to make the nuptials as splendid as possible, it was judged advisable to put them off till the grand festival of the Misslétoe.

Of this arrangement we may be well assured that Ethne heartily approved, as it gave her respite from the dreaded marriage, for she had never brought herself to love O'Neil,

though she had endeavoured to do so, even before there was any other known to her whom she could prefer; and she had formerly submitted, with reluctance, to the necessity of circumstances, in coming under his protection at Clogharnbrec, to take advantage of that wild retreat for securing the sacred parchments. Now, that she had seen the prince, and had gradually advanced from a sisterly affection for him to one more tender, she could with difficulty bring herself to think of O'Neil at all. The period between her arrival at the grove and the festival was consequently passed in dismal reflections on her future destiny; the only consolation of which was, that the restless ambition of O'Neil would allow her to give much of her time to solitary musing This was indeed a forlorn hope, but it was the only flower which rose on the waste of her desolated prospects; and dusky and drooping as it looked, she cherished it as affectionately as it had been the first nursling of spring.

She had endeavoured to divert her thoughts from this gloomy futurity, by her attentions to the melancholy situation of Jenny Grougar, and by daily reflections on the spirit of a religion which enjoined the offering of human victims to the gods. Ethne possessed considerable firmness of mind, as we have seen in her management of the prince's escape; but she had also much tenderness and humanity for human suffering, and was so gentle and mild, that she was loth to think any person could be guilty of crimes deserving so terrible an exit as had befallen poor Grougar. Now, in our notions of the Divinity, we are always swayed by our own dispositions and passions, and men have always pictured their gods to be merciful or avenging, just as they themselves chance to be so in their nature; a principle which made Rousseau, in a fit of infidelity, profess, that he could never understand why the gentle Fenelon could believe in the existence of hell, unless it were because he was a bishop. Ethne, like the

good Fenelon, had some indistinct notion of the gods punishing crimes, because it was a tenet of her religion; but, like him, her belief of this was faint, and never occurred to her thoughts, except when others of more savage dispositions recalled it, and even then, she could scarcely attribute to the Great Goddess Onvana the dark and malevolent passions of which she herself was so free. She never feared her gods, but she loved them; and it is utterly impossible ever to love a being whom we fear. The Druid priests, however, were commonly of a different opinion; for they were constantly terrifying their devotees with the vengeance of heaven, and the dreadful torments that awaited them after death, for the purpose, not of making them love the gods, and delight to serve them by cheerfulness and good works, but to make their own advice and assistance necessary to comfort despair and to take advantage of terror, to raise contributions for the support of religion. I am afraid that this is one of the

Druidical customs, which the Catholics thought fit to borrow, and which the Protestant divines stole from them, and are still fond of clinging to, though it is so notoriously Pagan. Imitators always grasp at faults; and if more influence can be gained over the people by the fear of God, than by the love of God, ways and means can easily be found to justify the preaching of the one and the concealing of the other; or, more wonderful still, of reconciling into perfect harmony these irreconcileable and discordant principles.

Ethne's mind was thus kept in great agitation, between the fears of a disagreeable marriage, and the doubts which had come into her thoughts about the propriety of human sacrifices, and, consequently, about the truth of the religion she had hitherto believed. She had even ventured to consult her father concerning these doubts; but she did this in entire ignorance of human nature,—for whatever doubts of the truth of his religion the old man might have had in his youth, had for

many years been overcome, and he began to look upon his lovely daughter as completely undone for broaching such blasphemous heresy. It is a very singular, but no less certain fact, that religious enthusiasts and impostors, though they begin by trying to deceive others, generally end in deceiving themselves. It is certain Mahomet did so, and most probably Calvin and Spinoza believed their wildest dreams. Brassail, like them, now believed firmly in the truth of his faith, and in all its infernal ceremonies; and so shocked was he at Ethne's questions, that he at that moment could have foregone all the tender feelings of a father, and dragged her himself to the bloody altar of the gods, whose attributes of vengeance she had dared to disbelieve; and, had he done so, I have no doubt he could as piously have quieted his conscience as Jephthah, when he sacrificed his daughter to the Lord in Gilead; or as Calvin, when he murdered Servetus, because he could not make him comprehend and believe, that the three

persons of the Trinity were at the same time distinctly supreme, and yet only one God.* Ethne's reception from her father on this occasion will, I am convinced, deter all who reads it from ever consulting their seniors about their religious scruples and doubts. They will only reap the advantage, if they neglect the warning of her example, of being pitied perhaps, but more probably of being severely chid and persecuted ;—plain advice, without rigorous and stern reproof, nobody will bestow upon any one who swerves from the opinions usually believed.

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* I am aware, that th s is the Shibboleth of a party ; but know, once for all, that it comes not from me as such, and that I will never mingle my feeble voice among the reptiles which nibble and gnaw at the sacred Scriptures, while they fill up the gaps with the spawn of their own abortions, trying to shelter their abominations under the great names of Newton and Locke, as if the eye of Almighty God could not mark the hiding-place of the moths and caterpillars which infest and crawl over his vineyard. Αυται υζρεως αι Θεολογιαι. κ.τ.λ. Clem. Alex. ad gent.

It was these heretical, or rather infidel notions of the mild and gentle Ethne, that had induced the old priest, her father, to call a grand sederunt of the Conclave, in which, with much address, without acquainting them with her spiritual fall, he got them to assent to the sacrifice of a *virgin*, under the plea of lustrating the more effectually the sacred parchments, which had been polluted by the hands of infidels through the misfortunes of his *virgin* daughter; and also the more effectually to purify Ethne herself from the unhallowed communion she had been forced to hold with the Catholics. Such was his pretence, and the auguries and lots consulted on the occasion were found to point out this inhuman sacrifice; but Brassail's real design was, not to sacrifice Ethne, as might have been supposed, but to redeem her from eternal perdition, by offering to the gods a virgin of high rank, as a substitute and equivalent for the life she had forfeited by her heretical doubts; for the old man could not bear to die with the

thoughts of his beloved daughter's apostacy on his mind, without taking every method his religion supplied to avert the consequences. It may be well supposed, however, that Ethne was not given to understand what was determined on in that dark conclave, though it was not long before it transpired in all the places adjacent to the grove.

Preparations were in the meanwhile going forward to celebrate the festival of the Missletoe; and what was no less important, the nuptials of Ethne with O'Neil; for Brassail had not hinted his daughter's religious scruples to the chief: and she had promised, at her father's request, not to mention them herself to any one but him. The old Arch-Druid had not the slightest notion that O'Neil himself had carried his doubts on the same topic much farther than the timid and modest suspicions of the fair Ethne, though he had proceeded on very different grounds. Ethne's scruples rose wholly from her tenderness and humanity, which had been strongly called

forth by the situation of poor Jenny Grougar; O'Neil's scepticism was raised by his dark views of human nature, in consequence of which he had come to the conclusion, that religion was invented by designing priests for their own emolument. He found it necessary, notwithstanding, to conceal these opinions from the world, and to keep on the best terms with the Druids, as their influence over the minds of the vulgar was of great use to sway them into his ambitious projects.

The day of the grand festival at last arrived, and joy was beaming from a thousand glad faces who had come from all parts to see the procession. The leading part of the ceremonies was not like those of the Samh'in formerly described, performed at night; they began a little before noon with bands of music going through the woods in all directions, to summon the woodland divinities to the centre of the grove, where the main body of the Druids was assembled. The effect of this was very imposing; and Farquhar, who had

never been present at this festival before, and who had fine musical feelings, was quite enraptured to hear every part of the far-spread forest resounding with the pipe and the flute, and the swelling echo of the bugle-horn. He forgot that they were the sounds of superstitious devotion, and he gave himself up to the sweet lapse of thought, which woodland music seldom fails to beget, though it proceed from the artless piping of a shepherd boy, or the homely song of a rustic forester.

The Druids had stationed their musicians with much judgment, so as to produce the grandest effect. The bugles were heard from the more remote parts of the forest, and several of them from certain rocks which rose from the bosom of the grove at a distance, and were deemed to be the haunt of Rock-Nymphs,—a very beautiful race of fairies, and much taller than the little green-robed elves of more modern times. At the bottom of these fairy-rocks several harpers played wild voluntaries at every pause of the bugle-horns

above, and the deep solemn beat of a tambour rose by intervals, and mingled in harmony with the soft tinkle of the harps, and the music of a small brook which gurgled by. In the nearer and more close places of the grove, where the trees thickened their ranks, and embowered the earth with the interweaving of their branches, the sweet music of flutes and flageolets re-echoed along the woody arches of the boughs, and floated to the ears of the assembly, through the thick and tangled wall of shrubs and trees intermingled and interwoven. The effect of the music was also heightened by the bright sunshine of a spring-day, which made every wood and field look cheerful and glad, and wooed forth the young snow-drop and the rath primrose, and the little yellow celandine and "violets dim, taking the winds of March with beauty,"* on the edges of the

* Cymbeline.

thickets, and under the covert of the hawthorns. Farquhar was so enraptured and airborne with the whole scene, that he thought the sunshine was blent with the music, and floated over the forest in one bright and airy concert of harmony; and little tufts of wane-clouds, that sailed high in the air, like the white waves of a summer sea, hung over the sunshine music of the forest, as if it had stopt their course in the heavens and charmed them to a pause.

When the musicians had thus hymned the woodland gods and the beautiful rock-nymphs, and rung their invitation and glad welcome from pipe and harp and horn, they returned in little bands along the glades of the wood, to join the grand assembly and lead the procession, playing all the way the same sweet music. They were met by Brassail and his Druids, attired in white, and carrying their white rods; and by the fair Ethne and a train of young Druidesses; for she had not yet doubted so deeply as to prevent her from

joining in the fine pastoral ceremonies of this splendid holiday. She wore the same azure-blue robe and yellow scarf which we have already seen was her usual dress; and the only additional ornament she had put on for the festival was a fine gold crescent, instead of the fillet which usually braided her hair. The crescent represented the moon when six days old, and was inlaid with radiations of rich native gems of opal, and amethyst, and ruby.* Her attendant nymphs were apparelled in bright yellow robes, and plaids chequered with green, and blue, and scarlet. On their heads they wore a simple fillet, from under which their fine long hair fell in ringlets on their shoulders. Young girls are always fond of show and spectacles, and in this numerous group every face looked gay and gladsome,

* I follow here the common language, meaning by ruby, the pyrope of mineralogists, or, perhaps, the precious garnet. All these have been found in Ireland, and the Druids knew well how to work them.

except the countenance of their beautiful mistress, which was overshaded with a pale sadness, that went not in unison with the bright sunshine of the day, and the cheerfulness of all around her. Every body, however, was so joyous and full of glee, that her sadness was overlooked, and the procession began to set forward to the scene of the grand ceremony, with the music playing and the long-robed priests, with their white wands, walking in slow and measured pace through the wood.

The place in which the missletoe that was to be cut, had been, the day before, found growing, was a thicket of wild apple bushes and hazels, at the side of the stream that run through the forest. Between this thicket and the brook was a small green margin, clear of bushes, and already smiling with primroses and mountain-daisies, and the tiny blossoms of the field-strawberry. Here the procession halted, and twelve of the young maidens advanced and sung a wild irregular chant, while

they tript a rural dance on the turf, falling into circles, and other figures, as the music directed; while two of the number broke loose from the rest—darted into the crowd which stood around the aged Brassail,—laid hold of a youth who had shrunk away behind others, as if to hide himself from them,—and each taking him by the hand, led him forth blushing, and placed him in the circle of the girls, who continued to dance round him and chant their wild music as before.*—It was young Fergus.

The expedition to Caledonia to consult Merlin had not been given up; but, in consideration of the nuptials, it had been postponed, because Fergus was chosen to perform a principal part in the festival. It was what

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* After what we have so often remarked concerning the similarity of ancient and modern customs, we need not be surprised that something very like this circular singing dance is preserved at this day among female children in their sports.

the Greeks and Romans would have called the part of Bacchus or of Hymen, for it partook of both these in some measure. After the dance was concluded, the girls still kept him prisoner in their circle, while Brassail advanced to the tree where the finest missletoe was growing, took a golden knife from his girdle, and, having cut the plant, delivered it to Ethne, who was attending beside him. She immediately went to the circle of her nymphs, going thrice round it, each time supplicating for admittance to their young prisoner, and being as often refused, till seconded the third time by the rest of the girls who were not in the dance. When Ethne was admitted to the young captive, she wreathed the green branch into an elegant coronal, and placed it among the ringlets of his hair. This was the signal for the whole assembly to advance among the trees and cut down what remained of the missletoe, and also boughs of ivy, with which they made wreaths for their hair, and carried branches in their hands. The order and so-

lemnity which had till now prevailed, was suddenly changed into a mingled scene of joyful confusion. Every individual, indeed, appeared desirous of showing a degree of gladness above the rest; and the girls prankt in their green garlands, and the youths and old men, looked as if they should never tire of skipping along the margin of the brook, and enjoying the twinkle of the sunshine that played on the stream, and fell with summer beauty on the early flowers. It seemed, indeed, as if the restless spirit of frolic, which chases the lambs in the meadow, and sports with the insects that dance in the evening air, had come abroad among this glad assembly to revive the youth of the aged, and to laugh away sorrow from the young.

The music now played a return, and all arranged themselves in the same order in which they had come, with the addition of the little idol of the procession, Fergus, who was carried, by the damsels that had taken him captive, on a green litter constructed of

willow and ivy branches, and the lively girls seemed much pleased with their burden, for Fergus was really a very handsome boy, or youth if you will, for he was properly neither, but, as Shakespeare would have said, "like an after-dinner's sleep, dreaming on both." His handsome figure all bedecked with evergreens, and sitting gracefully on the litter above the rest of the procession, had a fine pastoral effect, and the dark-green coronals which braided the hair of the young damsels, and the ivy boughs which the white robed Druids bore in their hands, and the slow music, and the bright sunshine, exhibited a picture which left a lasting charm on the minds of the spectators.

The most conspicuous figures in the procession were the aged Brassail and his lovely daughter. The old man walked with such reverend step, and his long white beard flowed so solemnly down his breast, that he was at once known to be the superior of his order. Ethne also had an air of superiority above the

damsels which followed in her train; but it was not so much the superiority of years, much less of pride or haughtiness, as of modest elevation of mind and a nameless but striking grace in her air, that made her beloved by all and looked up to by all, independently of her high birth, which, of itself, never fails to beget contempt for those who are unworthy of esteem. She had, indeed, an air of sadness on this occasion which overclouded the cheerfulness she endeavoured to assume; for to-night O'Neil was to claim the promise of her hand, and her principles of truth were too deeply fixed to be overthrown even by the power of love, and she determined to suffer in silence, as many a fair lady has done since for the same reason.

In the evening, the grand gallery of the grove was lighted up with much splendour, so that, from what you heard of its awful gloom, and the rolling of its thunders, when Saint Patrick passed through it as a captive, you would not now recognize it to

be the same place, when lamps were hung from every twig of the embowering branches, and the dance and the song resounded along the tangled canopy, and the white trunks of the trees that stood in long ranges on each side, were all streaming with light and with nuptial garlands. Many ceremonies of preparation were gone through before the concluding one of uniting the happy or rather unhappy pair; but at last the stern chief, who had just arrived from Rath-na-Carraig, advanced into the gallery with an overbearing look on all around, and demanded to see his reluctant bride. Ethne, however, had revealed her reluctance to no one, and her father imputed her sadness to the religious scruples and doubts of which she had told him, otherwise he would never have consented to give her away, though he had given his promise so to do; for he loved her with all the warmth of paternal affection, and would have found some means or other for plausibly breaking off the match.

She advanced to meet the chief with as much firmness as she could muster, and it was not much, for her lips quivered and her knees smote against each other; but she succeeded in supporting herself with great resolution to go all lengths, rather than make her father forfeit his promise; and the old man took her hand with so much kindness to join it with O'Neil's, that she could not refuse him.

This concluding part of the ceremony was then just to be performed, when a wild cry alarmed them from behind the trees, and an unearthly looking figure darted between the bridegroom and his bride, throwing a most contemptuous and terrific look at the former. It was poor Jenny Grougar, who had escaped from her bonds in the cabin, and had been probably attracted to the grove by the noise of the marriage revelry. She did not remain long silent, but addressed O'Neil with,

"What hae ye made o' my Jock, ye muckle gauntres o' a rybel loon, it ye are?

Whar is he, I say? ye wys't him awa', did ye no, tae tak pairt in your black rebellion, an' what hae ye dune wi' 'im?—He's gane, gane, gane; an' nou I'm left tae sab frae mornin' tae e'enin' wi' my puir fatherless bairns when ye're haudin' up your vile dinnous goravich i'the wuds here, it the vera craws canna get sleepin' for your rheemous an' rantin', ye wyl' warlock-like pack o' Sathan's clanjamfry. Oh! Oh! thae awsome waves, and that fearsome cove! I think I sall gang down tae the grave with the squash o't jawin' in my ears, and the pitifu' cries o' my puir Jock it ye murder't in't."

O'Neil was quite furious at this interruption, and was about to run his spear through the body of the poor creature, who was by the way much calmer than usual. Ethne perceiving his intention, rushed fearlessly between him and the object of his vengeance.—"There it's! There it's!" whispered Jenny in a low voice, when she saw the lady whom she always took for her guardian angel, "O

but the Lord's gude to me it sae ill deserves't!"

Brassail now declared that the ceremony could not be performed which had been thus interrupted, till a farther consultation of the auguries were made; for, like the Mahometans of the present day, the Druids believed that mad people never did any thing without a direct impulse from heaven. Whether this were the case here I dare not presume to conjecture, but it is certain it was a happy occurrence for the distressed Ethne. O'Neil became quite ungovernable with rage, and even hinted that it was all a trick contrived by malice to ruin his felicity; so he had the effrontery to term this marriage of his blameable ambition. He dared not, however, go so far as accuse the Arch-Druid himself of the trick, much less Ethne, whose open frankness and upright principles he knew well would never condescend to such artifices, particularly, as he judged from his own principles, when she had the prospect of being

queen of Ireland, after he had defeated and subdued the forces of Logaire, a thing he meant to do with all possible speed. His suspicions fell upon Calye Mulloy, who had lately dared to utter some prophetic denunciations against him; but whoever had let loose the maniac was of little consequence now, for Brassail declared he could not dispense the ceremony till he had consulted the gods by sacrifice, and O'Neil was forced to return to the Rath as he came; and Ethne was respited till the virgin sacrifice should be offered, for her father was not without his suspicions that the gods had prevented the nuptials on account of her wavering faith;—

> The end whereof, and dangerous event,
> Shall for another canticle be spared;
> But here my weary teeme, nigh overspent,
> Shall breathe itself a while after so long a wente.
>
> SPENSER'S *Faerie Queene.*

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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